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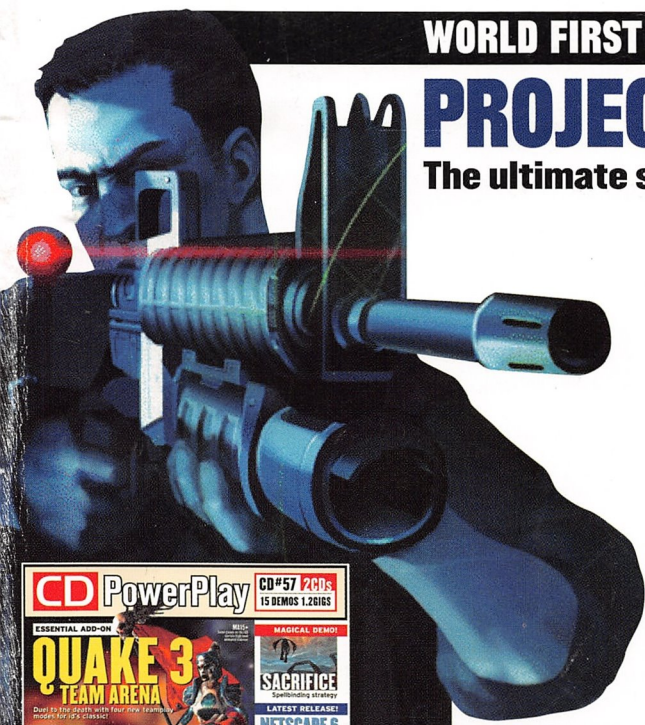
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The rally king takes
the chequered flag



PLAYTESTED!

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for id Software's
teampay add-on?



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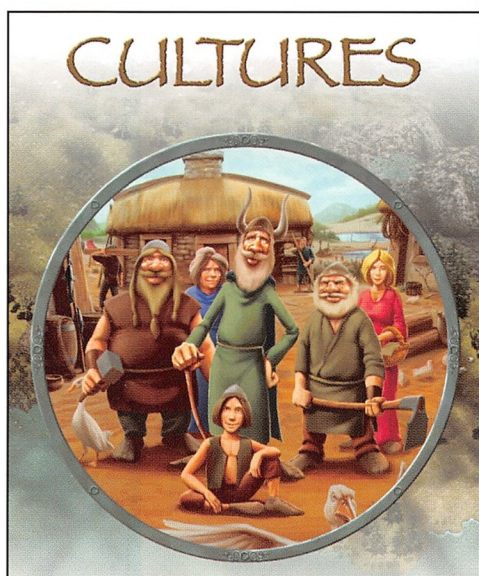


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The next generation in 'god' sims

With over 100 hours of highly addictive gameplay, Cultures offers clear advances in the strategy/'god' sim genre.

A Graphical Feast

Cultures offers engrossing graphics and animations. The environment is lush and warm with a diversity of landscapes and tribes from Indians to Mayas. The character animations are captivating and humorous.

Great attention to detail and highly effective AI

Each character is an individual both physically, defined with different clothes, hair and other physical attributes, and in terms of their personality. Characters need to eat and sleep, marry, have children and progress through different jobs. This adds to the dynamics of the game play and the attachment the player acquires for his tribesmen.

Intuitive Control System

The control system is designed to ensure immediate accessibility to all levels of experience. The interface enables easy access to all Vikings, clicking on the home allows the player to instantly locate them regardless of where they are on your map. In battle a bar above their head indicates the state of health during combat, essential in a good real-time strategy game.

Instantly gratifying with rewarding long-term gameplay

The player must undertake complex missions with multiple mission objectives. Each mission is placed on a huge map, which has to be discovered by the player; who will encounter numerous physically varied locations and enemy tribes.

BE THE FIRST TO DISCOVER...



CULTURES

THE DISCOVERY OF VINLAND

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What will you be playing this year? Over twenty pages, we have researched close to one hundred new games we think should occupy your leisure time throughout the next twelve months

2001

A GAMES ODYSSEY



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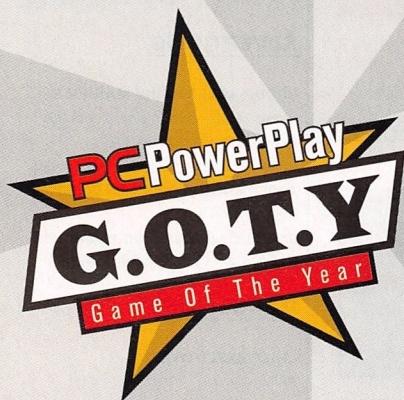
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GOING GOLD



DAVID WILDGOOSE

To break my addiction to Zeus for good

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Zeus (I tried!)

As impressive as we confidently believe it is, the magazine you now hold in your hands is but a beta version. For the uninitiated, the term 'beta' is commonly used to describe computer software that is feature complete yet still possesses a number of bugs. During the 'beta test' period, these bugs are - hopefully - ironed out and removed altogether, allowing the developer or publisher to declare the finished software 'gold'. Which is exactly what we've been doing for the past six months. Now, we are just about ready to 'go gold'...

Since the successful redesign in PCPP#53, we have been inundated with your feedback - praising the new style yet also forthcoming with plenty of excellent suggestions. Taking all this on board (especially the criticism), our sight has very much been set upon reinventing Australia's only magazine for PC gamers in time for the March 2001 issue.

On February 7, you will discover the 58th edition of PC PowerPlay embracing a broader range of products, issues and technology; content that more adventurously explores the fields of interest relevant to today's PC gamer.

Next month will see the introduction of the PowerTest. Featuring comparative product reviews and a thorough performance analysis,

the PowerTest will highlight a particular component essential to any serious games enthusiast's setup. Regular, in-depth investigations into recent developments in internet technology, PC hardware and games design are to become a mainstay. Plus, a host of tweaks will ensure PCPP cements its status as the number one source of information for gamers like yourself and the best value for money magazine in the country.

Heading into this exciting future, however, our primary focus of attention will of course remain on the games. Let's face it, the only conceivable reason why anyone needs the latest, fastest hardware or online access is to play the newest releases. PCPP continues to keep you abreast of how the latest games are meant to be experienced.

Which segues rather nicely into this issue's main feature - 2001: A Games Odyssey. Across twenty pages we have selected the cream of this year's extremely promising crop of new games; from firstperson shooters and political strategy to online worlds and even train sims, there's definitely something to whet the fussiest of appetites.

Enjoy the issue and, once you've finished, mark down February 7 in your diary. The future starts then - I can't wait...

david@next.com.au

THE PC POWERPLAY CREW

With 2001 having just arrived, we're thinking about our New Year resolutions...



BRETT ROBINSON

To get a gig as a TV voice-over guy

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Tribes 2



HUGH NORTON-SMITH

To return from Byron Bay

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Tony Hawk 2



MARCH STEPNIK

I'll buy myself a new pointy hat

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Virtual Pool 3



HARRY MARAGOS

Drink more beer!

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Unreal Tournament



CHANTAL BAIRLE

Don't you make all of those up on New Years at 5am?

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Backgammon



ASHLEY MILLOTT

Still trying to live up to last years!

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Armed Police Batrider



MIKE WILCOX

I'll not write any more lame comments on this page

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Red Faction



MJ DES MCNICHOLAS

To get a pay raise out of David

WHAT I'M PLAYING

B-17 2



CHRISTIAN READ

To get the lame, midget lap-dancer to drop charges

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Blair Witch



DANIEL STAINES

I can't say, but it involves me, Killcreek and a tub of taffy

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Deus Ex



RYAN HOVINGH

To convince someone to send me to E3

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Might & Magic VI



ANTHONY FORDHAM

Start a new religion

WHAT I'M PLAYING

Vangers, damn you.

PC PowerPlay

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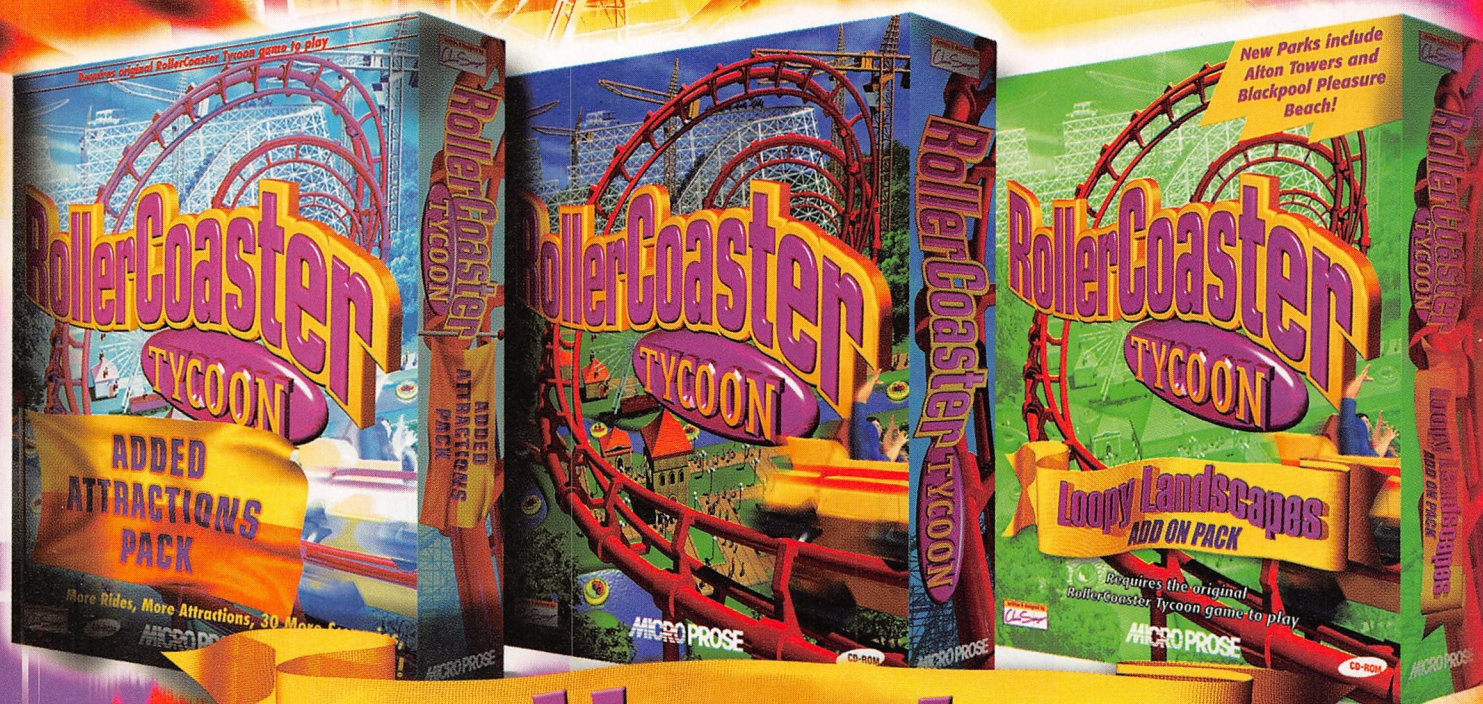
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Kmart

MYER

GRACE BROS



Clive Barker's Undying

FAMOUS AUTHOR AND FAMOUS FILM DIRECTOR TEAM UP TO TERRIFY US ALL

DETAILS

GENRE

Action

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Dreamworks

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

DUE

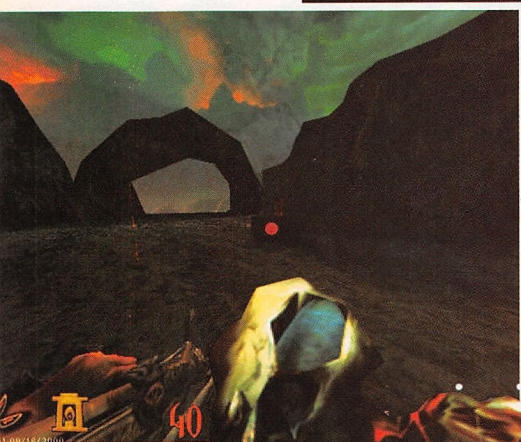
February

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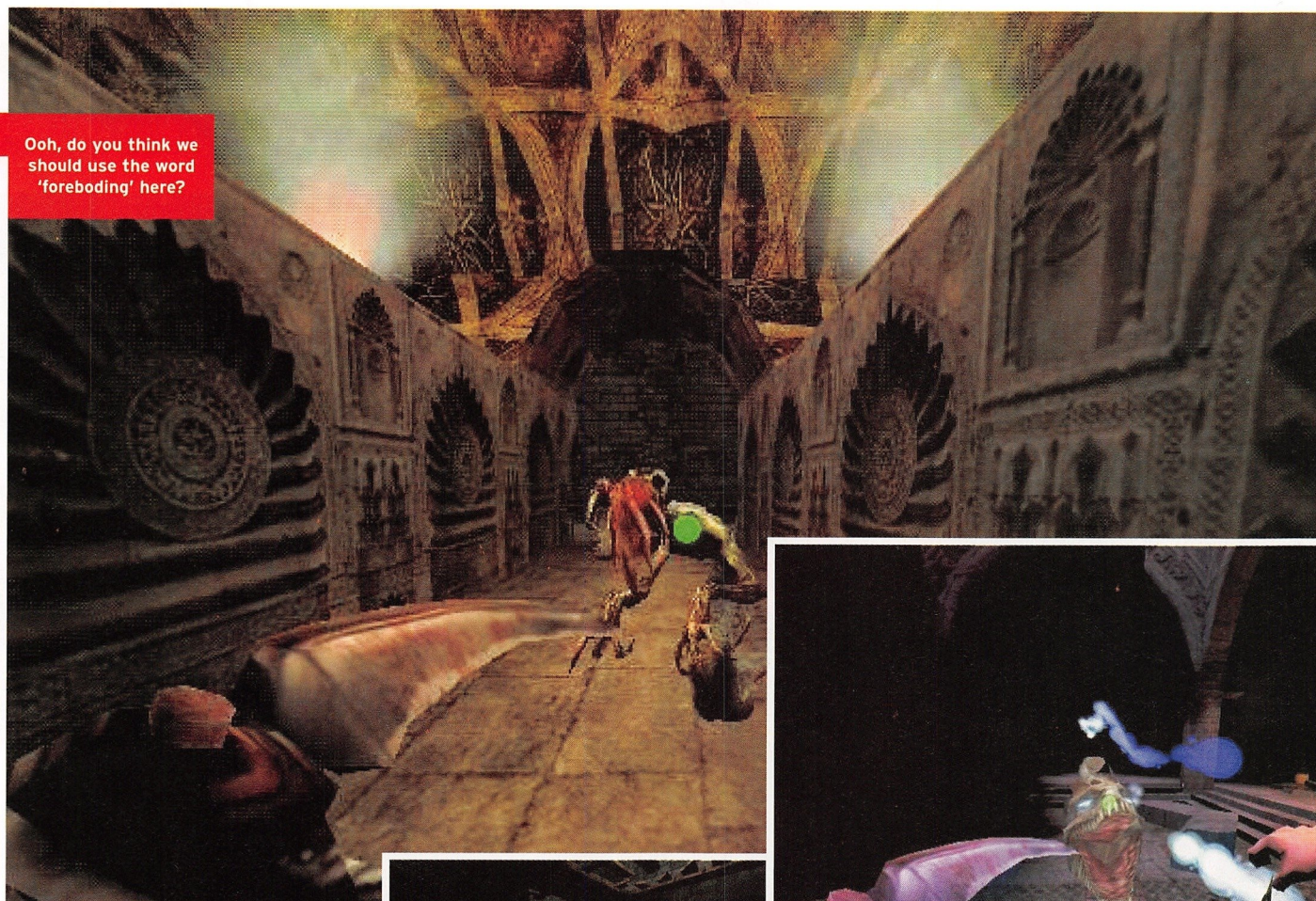
TBA



The caption wisely decides to give this little guy plenty of elbow room...



Ooh, do you think we should use the word 'foreboding' here?



Mobs of chattering skulls, amplified ectoplasmic energy bolts, and death cries written in blood on the walls of the cellar beneath an abandoned monastery. Clearly, Clive Barker's *Undying* (developed by Steven Spielberg's own game studio) is more than just another firstperson shooter.

Does anyone remember *Realms of the Haunting* from a few years back? A creepy, spooky journey into the hellish depths of the macabre, it was a firstperson action game that mixed puzzling and shooting elements to remarkably suspenseful effect. However, the frankly rubbish technology of the time certainly diluted the impact. With Dreamworks' proprietary engine providing the power, *Undying* appears eminently placed to bring the firstperson horror theme bang up to date.

For those unaware, Clive Barker is a successful author whose novels are invariably greeted with words such as 'spine-tingling', 'chilling' and 'aaargh!' by readers and critics alike. Through a friend of a friend of a... etc, he became involved in the development of the game in what is perhaps best described as a consultant capacity. Dreamworks was already



Weapons are held in the left hand, while the right casts spells

designing a horror-themed title at the time, but Barker's name and creative influence was an association it found hard to resist.

Spectral surprise

Like any good horror game, *Undying* takes place in a ramshackle mansion - this time the Covenant Estate - that is presumably home to zombies, poltergeists and an assortment of doubtlessly evil spectral types. The unusual firstperson view was chosen to better evoke a sense of claustrophobia, thanks to the limited field of vision it presents. Increasing the disorientation is the way the view shakes when the player is hit, with blood dripping down the screen to indicate the severity of the injury.

More than that, though, the perspective caters for the arsenal of ranged weapons at the player's disposal. Anyone who recalls

trying to aim properly in *Nocturne* or *Resident Evil* will appreciate the merit of this design decision. Featured amongst the weapons are not only various handguns but also a rather impressive array of magic. The effects of spells such as *Skullstorm* - in which the abovementioned mob of skulls is unleashed upon an enemy (*a la Planescape: Torment*) - *Lightning*, *Firefly*, *Shield*, *Invoke* and *Scry* can all be enhanced through considered use of an *Amplifier*. The latter *Scry* spell coolly allows the revelation of secret areas and residual traces of the ethereal, in doing so fleshing out (pun intended) the game's hopefully strong narrative.

With the combined efforts of these diverse spells and weapons, the obvious potential of the game's 3D engine, and the sinister touch Barker will surely have on the atmosphere and story, Clive Barker's *Undying* is definitely more than just another firstperson shooter.

David Wildgoose

WHY CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING DEMANDS A SECOND LOOK...

■ The emphasis on magic is novel and exceedingly cool

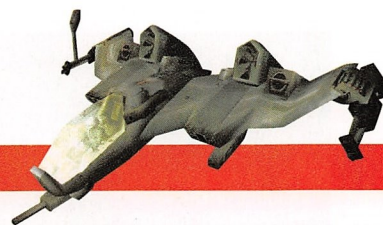
■ Barker's imagination will produce nightmarish creatures

■ Horror with an essential firstperson perspective

■ Morte from *Torment* lives on in the *Skullstorm* spell

Yager

IN WHICH THE GERMANS REINVENT THE ACTION-STRATEGY GENRE



DETAILS

GENRE

Flying FPS

MULTIPLAYER

Ja

DEVELOPER

Yager

PUBLISHER

THQ

DUE

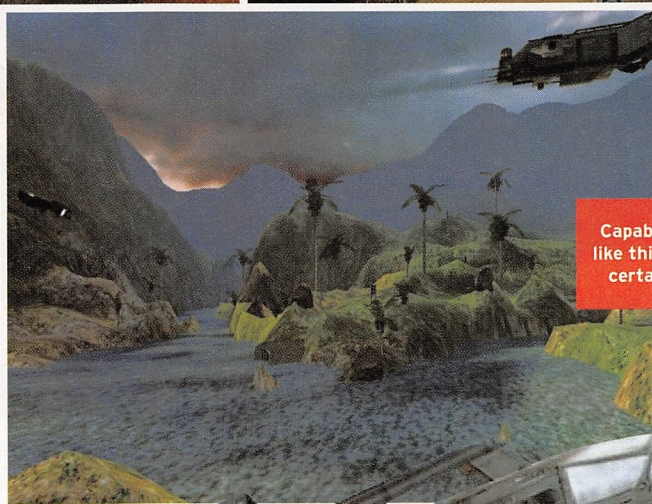
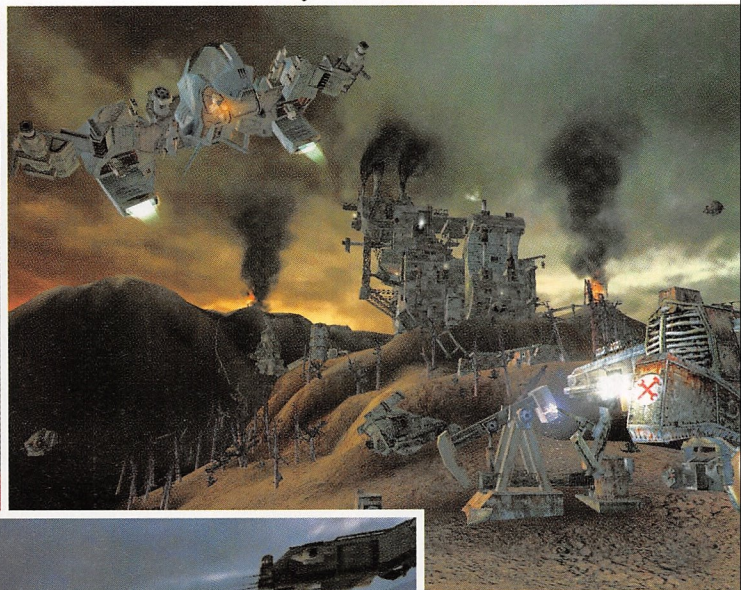
2001

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www.yager.de

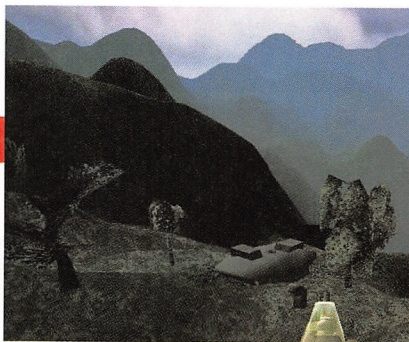


At this stage, Yager is merely a codename rather than the actual title

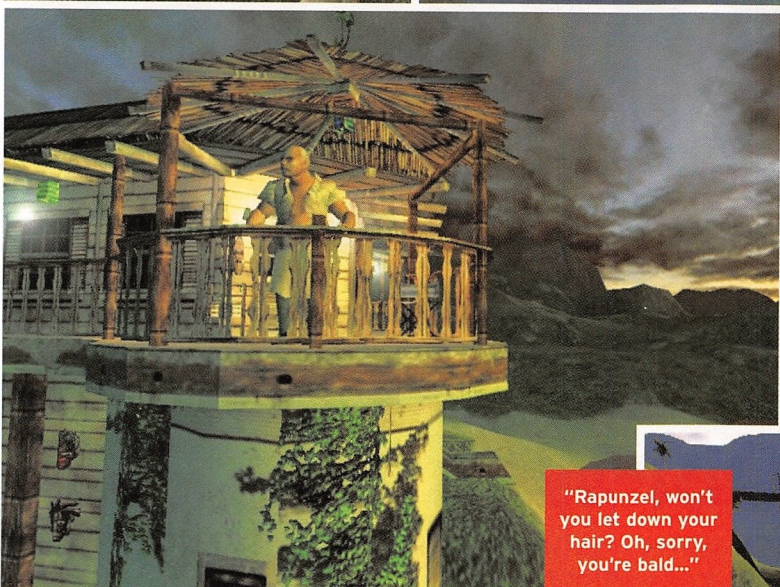


Capable of natural scenery like this, the Yager engine is certainly full of potential





An explosion of some indeterminate description. Obviously



"Rapunzel, won't you let down your hair? Oh, sorry, you're bald..."



Rationally speaking, it would seem viable to suggest that the more development time a software house wastes on trying to come up with a witty or catchy title for their game, the less time they have to actually, you know, make the game good.

Take, as a case in point, 'Howzat'. It's not the most witty of titles, sure, but remember: this game is quite possibly the worst game in the history of all games. It garnered a whopping great score of 2% in PCPP#22, and that's only because policy prohibits us from giving negative scores. Keeping that dismal fact in mind, one would think that perhaps the developer really shouldn't have spent so much of its obvious brainpower coming up with the title. Perhaps, instead of spending long hours debating whether 'Howzat' or 'Stumped' was the wittier title for such a gaming opus, it could have simply named the game 'Cricket' and gotten on with making it far less evil than it actually was.

Or they could have taken a cue from German developer Yager, and simply named the game after themselves. In fact, adopting this apparently egomaniacal (must... refrain... from... mentioning Sid

Meier) policy appears to have saved so much time for Yager that its upcoming action hybrid looks to be shaping up very interestingly indeed. That's what the extra non-naming time buys you - quality. And in this case, lots of it.

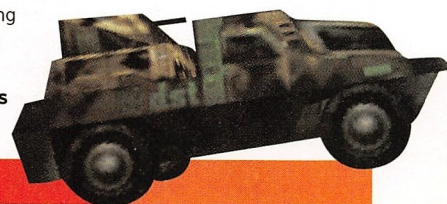
Space drama

Admittedly, little is known about the game at this time. But after viewing the available screens and tentative storyboards, it becomes obvious to the observer that Yager has many of the hallmarks of a quality title. Incorporating elements of traditional firstperson action with the gritty thrill of intergalactic dogfighting, Yager appears to have a distinctly underground Russian flavour that's complemented by what looks to be a plot not unlike a Dostoyevskian space-drama. This is definitely a good thing because, really, how many of you read Crime and Punishment, rubbed your chin pensively and said, "You know, this kinda stuff would make for a great game"? None of you? Ahem. Right, moving swiftly on...

As you can see from the snaps, Yager looks pretty indeed, and has a lovely futuristically dirty look to it. Exactly what type of graphical nuances we can expect to see in Yager remains unknown, but one can expect they should be far from monotonous. This is mainly because of the wide variety of missions, including basic escort missions and all-out galactic war scenarios, thus making for a plethora of interesting settings.

The Brothers Karamazaov meets Lando Calrissian, with a whole stack of guns thrown in for good measure? Yes, we will have one plate of steaming hot Yager, please. And as soon as possible...

Daniel Staines



WHY YAGER DEMANDS A SECOND LOOK...

■ An interesting variety in mission structures

■ Incredible visuals give depth to gritty space atmosphere

■ ...that is complemented by an interesting plot

■ It's the first effort from a fledgling software house

FEATURING

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THIRD DAWN

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DEUS EX

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STRONGHOLD

Spotlight

GAMING NEWS FROM ALL QUARTERS OF THE GLOBE

OUTFORCE

O3 Games has announced the development of 3D space-strategy title *The Outforce*. The game will offer three distinct races and the usual collection of units, with an alleged return to traditional RTS values. Oddly enough the game has already been released in Sweden, with a worldwide release expected in Q1 2001.

DEUS BAFTA

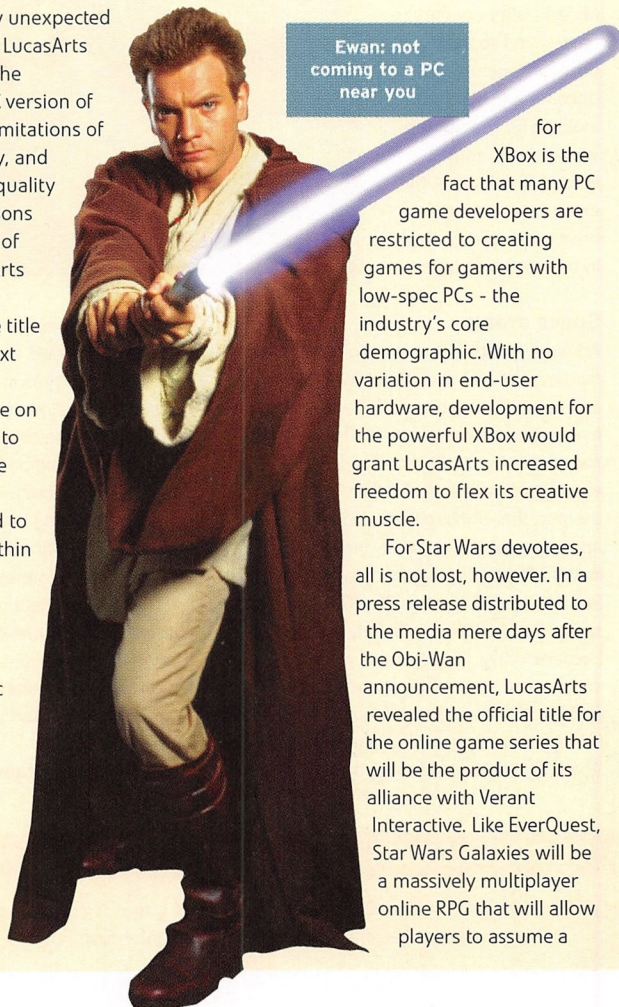
Deus Ex has won a prestigious British BAFTA award as Game of the Year 2000. The awards are presented for excellence in film, television and gaming. Warren Spector, project leader of the game, is reported to have been "pleased" with the award, especially as "we didn't really know how people would respond" to the game. The response continues to be favourable...

Farewell, Obi-Wan

IN SPITE OF HIS PROFICIENCY WITH A LIGHTSABER, OBI-WAN KENOBI HAS FALLEN PREY TO A GOOD OLD-FASHIONED AXE

In a completely unexpected turn of events, LucasArts recently announced the cancellation of the PC version of *Obi-Wan*. Citing the limitations of current PC technology, and recently heightened quality standards as the reasons behind the cessation of development, LucasArts stated that it is now planning to bring the title and its assets to a next generation console platform. A reluctance on the part of LucasArts to specify which console the game will be developed for has led to much speculation within the games industry. Many anticipate that *Obi-Wan* will be appearing on Microsoft's enigmatic Xbox; a console with performance specs that exceed those of Sony's recently-launched Playstation 2. Further evidence pointing to the possibility of *Obi-Wan*'s development

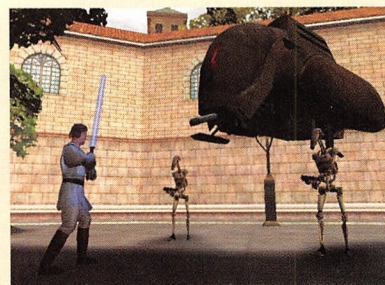
Ewan: not coming to a PC near you



for Xbox is the fact that many PC game developers are restricted to creating games for gamers with low-spec PCs - the industry's core demographic. With no variation in end-user hardware, development for the powerful Xbox would grant LucasArts increased freedom to flex its creative muscle.

For Star Wars devotees, all is not lost, however. In a press release distributed to the media mere days after the *Obi-Wan* announcement, LucasArts revealed the official title for the online game series that will be the product of its alliance with Verant Interactive. Like *EverQuest*, *Star Wars Galaxies* will be a massively multiplayer online RPG that will allow players to assume a

number of roles including those of mercenaries and rebel soldiers. Beginning at a home base on Tatooine, each player will be able to embark on quests and engage in epic battles, the results of which will have a tangible effect on the game world as a whole. It won't be possible for players to become established characters like Princess Leia or Han Solo, but many of these familiar characters will make regular appearances in the game. Each of the game's two planets will feature fifty massive adventure zones populated by scores of unique computer-controlled characters and creatures. LucasArts hasn't yet hinted at a possible release date, but preliminary testing of the game will commence in late 2001. Considering the number of gamers with a passion for all things Star Wars, LucasArts' and Verant's latest venture may well surpass the popularity of *EverQuest*, *Asheron's Call* and a host of other massively multiplayer online RPGs due for release in the coming months.



Ultima Online Third Dawn

ORIGIN GIVES 3D A FAIRE GO

On November 10 and 11 of this year, close to 1000 Ultima Online fanatics attended the first official Ultima Online World Faire. Launched in Origin's home city of Austin, Texas, the Ultima Online World Faire saw some of the game's most devoted players come face to face with the UO development team. A series of open forums allowed attendees to air any grievances and concerns, and discuss the future direction of the Ultima Online property. Origin representatives made note of these concerns, and recorded hundreds of suggested improvements and modifications to the aging game.

Following these discussions, Origin unveiled Ultima Online: Third Dawn. A 3D upgrade to the original UO, Third Dawn

will introduce a new landmass created specially for players with high-level characters who are looking for new challenges. Thirteen new creatures will make their debuts in Third Dawn, but Origin representatives remained tight-lipped when pressed for further information. However, they did reveal it would be possible for players to ride certain creatures of the realm. According to some development team members, there was some experimentation with unicorns for female characters, and a different type of mount for male characters. The development team is also considering the inclusion of seahorses as an intriguing means of nautical transport. Because of the determination to ship a

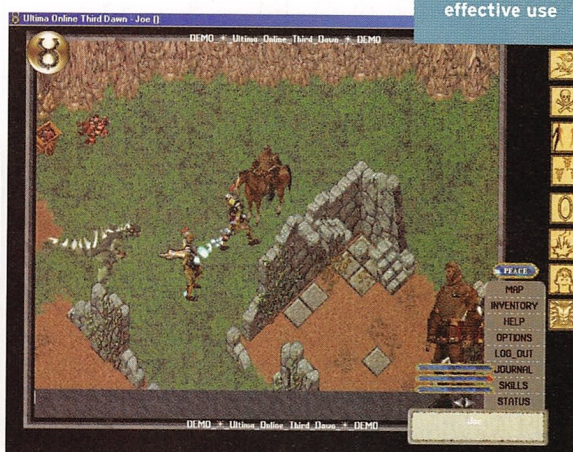
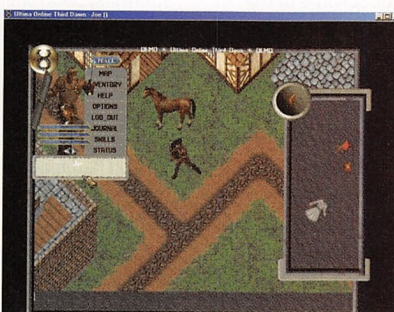
completely bug-free product, a release date for Third Dawn was not specified, nor did Origin reps provide an ETA on the title. However, given the incidence of disastrous upgrade launches in the past, this would seem to be a wise and admirable strategy.

At the conclusion of proceedings, the Ultima Online World Faire was declared a resounding success. Preparations for another, larger, event of this kind are currently under way.

USE YOUR HEAD

A new software product designed to convert head movements into game commands has been launched online at www.useyourheadsw.com. The program uses a USB webcam to recognise movement and convert it to a signal compatible with most games, with initial support for FPS titles. A retail release will follow.

Put that horse-riding skill to effective use



Freelancer threatened

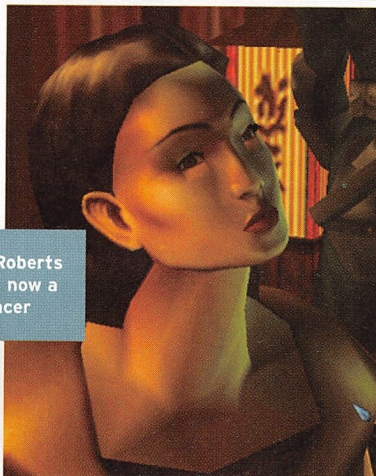
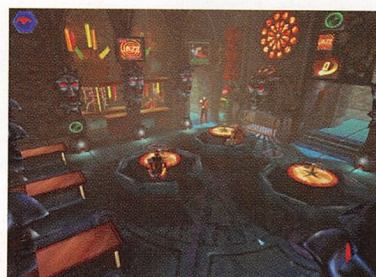
The future of the hotly anticipated Freelancer is in doubt, with the announcement that Chris Roberts has left Digital Anvil, following the company's acquisition by software giant Microsoft.

In a Microsoft press release, Roberts indicated he had left Digital Anvil to pursue creative endeavours elsewhere. However, he would continue as a creative consultant, "helping to craft [Freelancer's] intricate storyline and serving as an adviser to the development team."

In a separate statement Roberts assured us that Freelancer is mostly finished, with only a few elements required to complete the game. "All that remains is to generate content and flesh out its storyline," he said.

Future direction for Roberts seems uncertain, with yet another statement indicating the developer has no immediate plans, "...actually I just want to see Freelancer out the door and then I want to take some time to reassess everything. Taking three and a half to four years to build a massive title just seems like a huge amount of effort, there needs to be a better way to do it."

This latest takeover adds Digital Anvil to a growing list of Microsoft acquisitions, including FASA Interactive, creators of the Mechwarrior series; Access Software, who produced Links 2001; and Bungie, currently developing Halo, one of the most anticipated gaming titles for the coming year.



It seems Roberts himself is now a freelancer

GREY

Lionhead recently announced the formation of a third satellite studio to handle development of add-ons for the perennially upcoming Black and White. Lionhead claims to have been "inundated" with requests for add-ons, despite the game's continued absence from retail shelves. The as-yet-unnamed new studio will also produce Xbox and PlayStation 2 ports of the game.

SEQUEL POLL

www.godgames.com is conducting a poll to determine which Gathering of Developers game is most deserving of a sequel. Please don't vote for Jazz Jackrabbit 2.



DEATHROW

"It will send people to the edge of madness and bring their ultimate fears to the PC!" The developers of Deathrow, a recently announced 3D-action title, began the project on the premise that there is a "need for more emotion in games." Taking the part of a death row inmate, the player will indeed be driven to the edge of madness through use of guns and clever lighting. Further information is sketchy. Check out www.worldbenders.org

Australian Game Developers Conference

KEVIN CHEUNG REPORTS FROM THE SHOW FLOOR IN MELBOURNE

Videogames aren't mainstream. Yet. At least that was the implied message from Seamus Blackley at the second annual Australian Game Developers Conference in Melbourne. "I get really, fucking pissed off by magazines like Newsweek that say videogames are toys, not art", exclaimed the Xbox Director of Advanced Technology.

"It's important to me that games transcend what they are today. That being a gamer becomes cool. I really believe games are art." Blackley's message? There needs to be greater creativity and passion for the continued successes of the Australian game development community.

Community spirit

An Australian game development community? Yes, there is one. And a growing one at that. The Australian Game Developers Conference was set up as a workshop and meeting place for programmers to exchange ideas and learn about some of the newest advances in the industry. Big wigs from all the major players were present, like Adam Lancman (Infogrames Melbourne House MD), Alex Garden (Relic Entertainment) and Brian Reynolds (Civ II, Alpha Centauri).

Conference speakers came from from Electronic Arts, Microsoft, Ratbag, Microforte, Discreet, Tantalus, nVidia, 3Dfz, Sony Computer Entertainment Europe, and more, who canvassed topical areas like business management, general design, platform specific design, and art & development. Attendees could listen to talks like "Unlocking the secrets of the Xbox" with Seamus Blackley (which he didn't) or "Developing Games in Australia: Who can you turn to?"; and even philosophical debates like "Ethics in Games: How much is too much?". "A Car Driving and Navigation AI Case Study: South Park Rally" with Tantalus drew the most pre-show snickers.



Card swapping

Equally important is the fact that the conference is used as a major spawning pool for all the major companies to recruit new talent. Many small-time programmers handed out resumes and exchanged business cards with the bigger companies like EA and Infogrames, who in turn swarmed to the Xbox guys. The latter were unsurprisingly very popular, being at the top of the proverbial food chain and all.

But if you want to make Xbox games, you would've been directed to Scott Berfield's talk on "So you want to be an Xbox developer", where he announced the Xbox Independent Developer Program and Xbox Incubator Program. For the former, all one needs to get started is a Pentium III 733 with a GeForce 2 Ultra and they can apply for an Xbox Prototype Kit (XPB), which contains software and design information for the Xbox. The latter is an extended application for the XDK while one searches for a publisher.

The next two AGDC meetings will be held in Melbourne. Visit www.agdc.com.au for more details.

FREE GAMES

freelader.com, the free games network, has provided a number of games for download, including such classics as GTA London and Epic's Pro Pinball: The Web. Also worth a look is Supercross Kings, a motorcycling title that has never seen a retail release.



Deus Ex Multiplayer

Exciting news for fans of the PC Powerplay Best Game Ever, with the release of the Deus Ex multiplayer patch. Available for download, the patch provides four specially modified maps and four player models. Project leader Warren Spector stressed that the patch only offers player vs player deathmatch and co-operative deathmatch, with no AI opponents.

"There will be deathmatch and team deathmatch, but that's it. We did this because we wanted to gain some multiplayer experience... We have other projects that we want to concentrate on," he said.

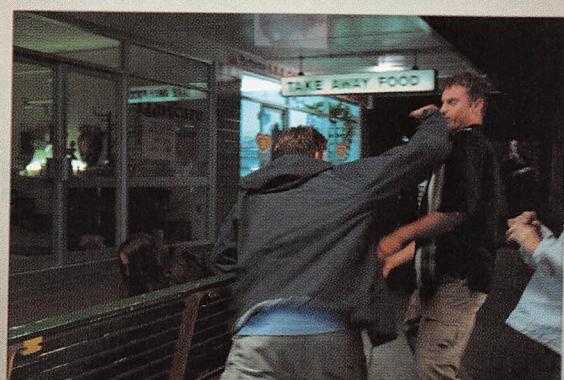
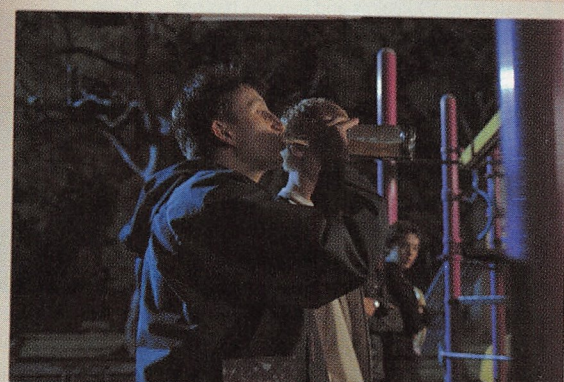
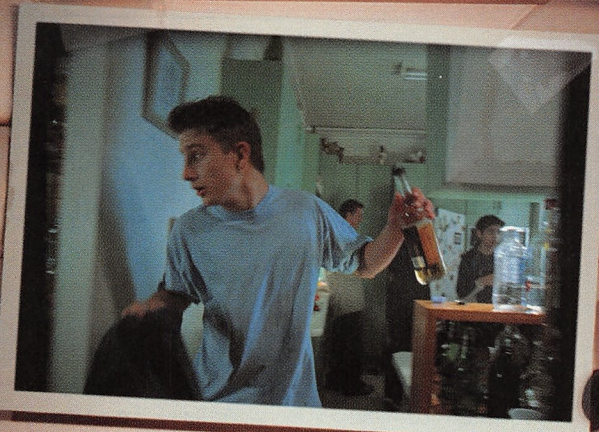
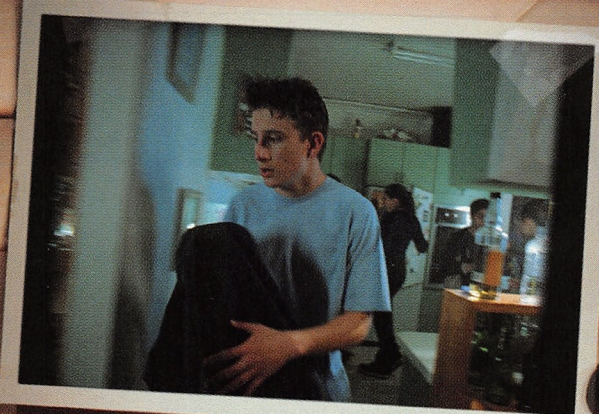
Changes to the game interface optimise weapon selection, skills and nano-

augmentations for multiplayer, and give the host the ability to set initial and maximum skill levels. Spector also mentioned that the patch would complete the Deus Ex software development kit, providing mod developers with all the tools needed to create new scenarios and play modes. Look out for the patch on next month's coverdisc.



The Anna Navarre skin will be available soon





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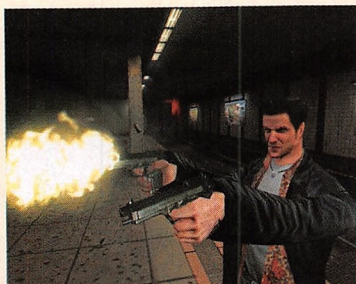
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Confidential

PLEASE SIGN THE REQUIRED NDA BEFORE READING THIS COLUMN

Hey, would you like to know what the Xbox looks like? Well, okay, we don't know for sure, but our spy in Seattle reports that the uber-console is PlayStation2-esque in size, shaped like a DVD player, fashioned in cool chrome, and boasts a big X on the top. He seemed a little confused as to whether it was a green X or not. Expect the full revelation at Gamestock in four weeks time... Expect to wait a little longer to see Max Payne, however. Despite some rumblings to the contrary, the long-delayed action title from 3D Realms and Remedy has not been cancelled. Word was that Gathering of Developers - provider of much of the game's financial support - was fed up with the delays (sound familiar?) and had pulled the plug. GOD's Mike Wilson was quick to emphatically deny the rumour, even if he did jokingly confirm it in a .plan update shortly afterwards. It must be tough being in Remedy's position though, knowing that you're answerable directly to GOD...



Strange happenings at Bluebyte this month. Initially it was announced that the planned public beta test for the forthcoming Settlers IV had been cancelled. The thinking behind this curious decision was that in order to achieve the game's pre-Christmas release date, an internal testing period would be more efficient than a lengthy public test. Understandably, this news wasn't received too well by fans of the series. Fortunately, Bluebyte came to its senses and has postponed the game's release until early this year. Still no public test, but the extra time should ensure a buggy version isn't rushed out the door...

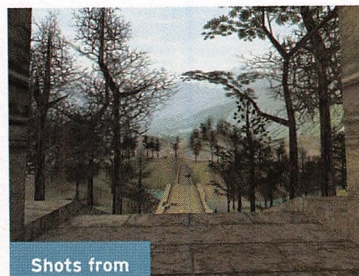
Xbox is Unreal

CONSOLE RECEIVES PC CAST-OFF

Epic's acclaimed game engine, Unreal, will be made available to developers working on titles for Microsoft's upcoming Xbox console. Following the release of Unreal Tournament on PlayStation2, Epic has expressed its desire to establish the Unreal engine as a viable cross-platform development tool. Epic's Mark Rein stated: "We've already completed, and more importantly we've shipped, the first console version of our engine and now we're aiming

our best technological guns squarely at the powerful Xbox. For Xbox developers, our very recent experience developing and releasing a top-quality next-generation console game is an invaluable support resource they can't get from any other engine vendor."

The Unreal engine has proved hugely popular amongst PC developers and has already been utilised for games such as Deus Ex, Rune, and Wheel of Time.



Shots from the Unreal 2 tech demo



MICROPOEM

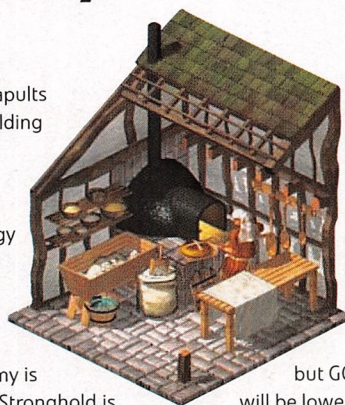
www.microprose.com was the recent victim of hacker takeover that replaced the site's usual content with a poem entitled "I lay down." This clever exploration of the endless prose vs poetry literary debate was the mastermind of 'nemesysm', a representative of the Delinquent Hacking Corporation. The poem has since been removed.

GOD's Country

TIME TO GET MEDIEVAL

Appalling hygiene, vats of boiling oil, catapults and drunken serfs - the medieval city building genre holds much untapped potential for game developers. Realising this, Gathering of Developers and Firefly Studios have banded together to create Stronghold, a realtime strategy game with a twist (*A twist? Never! - Ed*).

The title's constituent parts recall the likes of Impressions' superb "city building" series (Caesar, Pharaoh, Zeus). Emphasising the minutiae of medieval life - ensuring the economy is running smoothly and the populace is happy - Stronghold is



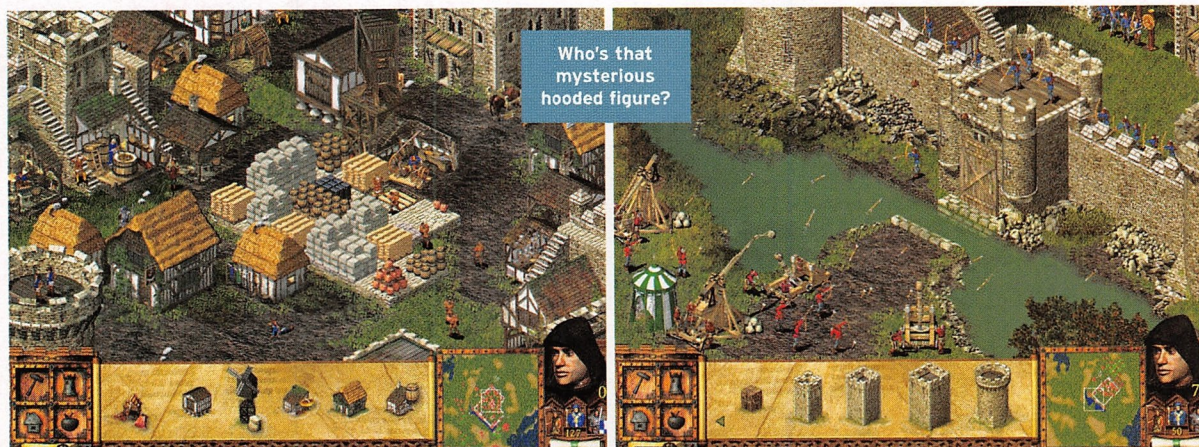
unlike the typical "build 'em up and go to war" approach of Red Alert. However, combat does play its part, thanks to the inclusion of a siege bit where the player lobbs rocks at an enemy's castle. Which sounds like fun.

Early days yet, of course, but GOD reckons the drawbridge will be lowered come September.



CODIE

Finalists for the 2000 Codie awards have been announced, and include Crimson Skies for best action game, Ground Control and Red Alert 2 for strategy, and an intriguing Disney title The Emperor's New Groove for arcade/adventure. The winners will be announced on March 12.





B-17

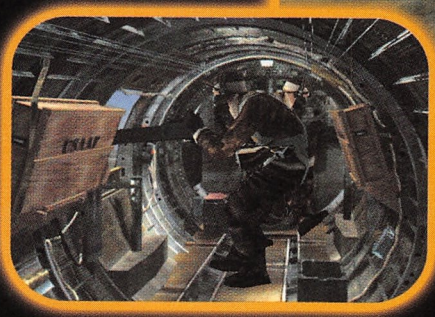
FLYING FORTRESS THE MIGHTY 8TH

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TEN BRAVE CREW.

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Aim the bombsight.
In B17 you can do it all.
Command your crew
or do their jobs for them – it's
up to you. Just make sure you
get your boys home.



MICRO PROSE
Rage

PC CD-ROM

G8+
LOW LEVEL
ANIMATED VIOLENCE

WAYWARD DESIGN

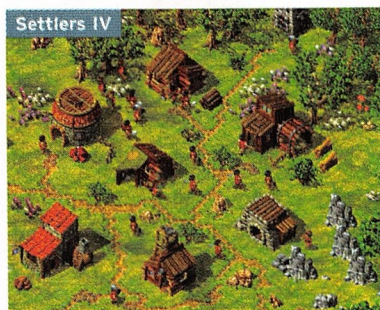
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Coming soon

JANUARY 2001

Deep Space 9: Dominion Wars (Ozisoft)
Dirt Track Racing: Sprint Cars (Jack of all Games)
Everquest: Scars of Velious (Ubisoft)
Heist (Ozisoft)
Jetfighter 4 (Jack of all Games)
Pro Rally 2001 (Ubisoft)
Quake 3: Team Arena (Activision)
SimCoaster (Electronic Arts)
Worms World Party (Ozisoft)

FEBRUARY 2001

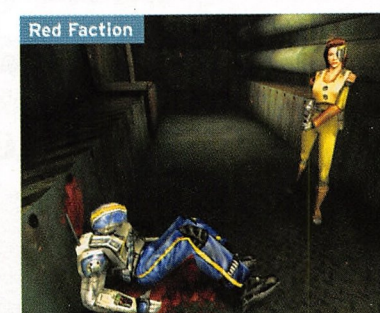
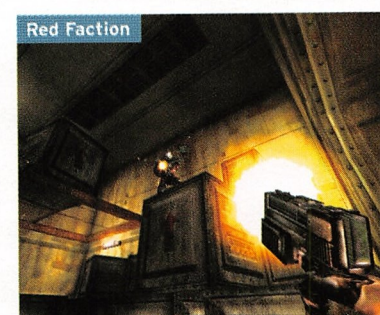
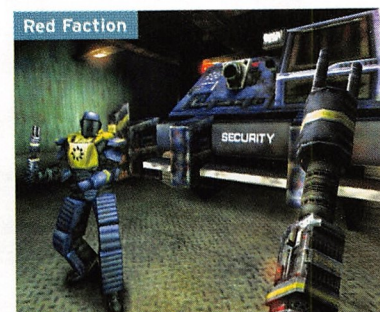
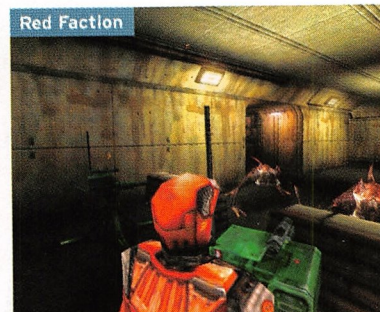
Anachronox (Ozisoft)
Arcanum (Jack of all Games)
Clive Barker's Undying (Electronic Arts)
Fallout Tactics (Interplay)
MechCommander 2 (Microsoft)
Oni (Jack of all Games)
Settlers 4 (Ozisoft)
Severance (Ozisoft)
Startopia (Ozisoft)
Tribes 2 (Jack of all Games)

MARCH 2001

Black & White (Electronic Arts)
Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Electronic Arts)
Commandos 2 (Ozisoft)
Desperados (Ozisoft)
Myst 3 (Mattel)
Planet of the Apes (Electronic Arts)
Pool of Radiance (Mattel)
Project Eden (Ozisoft)
Silent Hunter 2 (Mattel)
Throne of Darkness (Jack of all Games)
Tropico (Jack of all Games)

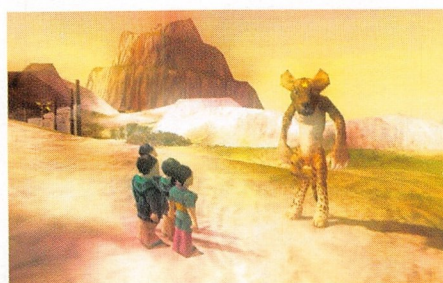
APRIL 2001

Evil Dead (THQ)
Harpoon 4 (Mattel)
I-War 2 (Ozisoft)
Mafia (Jack of all Games)
Return to Castle Wolfenstein (Activision)
Summoner (THQ)



Australia's most wanted

After being deposed last month by Halo, Peter Molyneux's pet project, *Black & White*, breakdances its way back to the top. Its release date may have slipped once more - though by only a month this time - but interest in the experiment into artificial intelligence shows no sign of waning. Likewise, the firstperson shooter remains as popular as ever, with no less than five games belonging to the genre featured in the chart. *Black & White*'s hold on the number one slot is perhaps by default, with the FPS fans forced to split their vote between *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*, *Halo* and *Red Faction*. Elsewhere, Westwood's next *Dune* title makes a predictable appearance, while the success of *Baldur's Gate 2* no doubt accounts for the renewed desire for Bioware's next RPG, *Neverwinter Nights*.



This month's winner, **Phillip Chan of Coogee, NSW**, will no longer need to purchase *Commandos 2*. It's his for free.
Send your Top Five most wanted games to:
wanted@pcpowerplay.com.au

- 1 **BLACK & WHITE**
- 2 **Return to Castle Wolfenstein**
- 3 **Halo**
- 4 **Red Faction**
- 5 **Commandos 2**
- 6 **Duke Nukem Forever**
- 7 **Emperor: Battle for Dune**
- 8 **Tribes 2**
- 9 **Neverwinter Nights**
- 10 **Warcraft 3**

Hall of fame

PCPP'S MOST RECENT GOLD AWARDED GAMES - BUY THEM ALL!

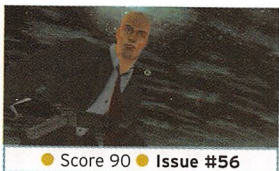


Red Alert 2

Electronic Arts

Westwood learned the lessons from Tiberian Sun, buffing and polishing the Red Alert sequel into perhaps the finest realtime strategy without polygons.

Score 91 Issue #56



Hitman Codename 47

Ozisoft

With awesome physics, excellent AI and the best-dressed game character in recent memory, Hitman couldn't fail. And didn't.

Score 90 Issue #56



No One Lives Forever

Electronic Arts

Many FPSs have laid claim to being the best since Half-Life. Monolith's Bond-inspired shooter holds the strongest case yet.

Score 90 Issue #56



Combat Mission

Battlefront.com

The biggest revolution in wargaming for years. Deep strategy and a 3D engine will immerse you on the battlefield like nothing else.

Score 90 Issue #56



Half-Life Counter-Strike

Jack of All Games

Tactical multiplayer warfare at its best. Offering tremendous value for money, this is the game that could steal Tribes 2's thunder.

Score 91 Issue #55

Our most wanted



Oni

David: The anime babes have it



Tribes 2

Hugh: Join Clan Norton-Smith



Fallout Tactics

Brett: It's apocalyptic



Munch's Oddysee

Anthony: Just because I'm odd

Games Chart

THE BEST SELLERS THIS MONTH

inform

The Official Australian
PC Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

October 2000

Top 20 Best Selling Full Price PC Games

(>\$29.95 inc. GST)

Position	Game Title	Game Type
1	↔ Baldurs Gate 2	RPG
2	↑ Age Of Empires 2	Strategy
3	↑ Sim Mania Pack	Bundle
4	↑ The Sims	Strategy
5	★ Cmmnd. & Cnqr. Red Alert 2	Strategy
6	↑ Cmmnd. & Cnqr. Tiberian Sun	Strategy
7	↓ Diablo 2	RPG
8	★ Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force	Adventure
9	↓ Sydney 2000	Sports
10	↓ Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2	Sports
11	★ Flight Sim 2000	Simulator
12	↓ Grand Prix 3	Racing
13	↑ Cmmnd. & Cnqr. World Warfare	Strategy
14	↓ Sim Mania For Kids	Strategy
15	↔ Stuart Little City Adventures	Family
16	★ Soldier Of Fortune	Action
17	★ Rollercoaster Tycoon	Strategy
18	↔ Age Of Empires	Strategy
19	★ Sim City 3000	Strategy
20	★ Blues Clues: Treasure Hunt	Edutainment

A V S D A
Australian Visual Software Distributors Association Ltd

★ New entry
↔ Non mover
↑ Up from last month
↓ Down from last month

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PC PowerPlay

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HP4



INBOX



Letters Topic: Tell us which genre will dominate this year

Write to: PC PowerPlay Letters, 78 Renwick St, Redfern 2016 Email: letters@pcpowerplay.com.au



Republic: one to watch, according to Thomas Marley

ALWAYS COMFORT MYSELF

God I miss Looking Glass Studios! I did not realise just how much of my gaming life was tied up with this one developer. Even if there were not any games on the horizon that seemed worth looking forward to, I could always comfort myself with "Oh well, the next LGS game will great". But alas now... the clouds just don't seem as fluffy these days. Long Live Looking Glass Studios.

Dom

10 MILLION POLYGONS

I was wondering if you guys had heard about a new game entitled Republic from Elixir Studios. Sure, there are new games being announced all the time, but what got me interested about this game is its graphics engine. Called the Totality engine, the company claims that it can produce scenes with "an unlimited number of polygons in realtime". If you have heard of it, then how would such a graphics engine be possible? The developers are talking about buildings

BYTE SIZE

I would like to end with my favourite quote from Deus Ex: "Somebody's wasted the bartender. Drinks are free!"

Jonathan Noonan

If you hadn't realised by now, yes, a Deus Ex reference almost guarantees that your letter will be published.

constructed of up to 10 million polygons, and character models of up to 80,000 polygons. Surely the average gaming system would have a seizure at the very thought of having to render that many polygons in realtime?

Thomas Marley

We hope the preview on p48 will whet your appetite for a more indepth examination of Elixir's mightily ambitious project in a forthcoming issue.

QUITE WITTY

Is it really necessary to have a caption under every screenshot in the reviews? I'll grant you that some of them are quite witty, but some of them are so obviously put there for the sake of having a caption, like "This caption is too short". Please consider your readers when you write pointless captions to your screenshots and try to have the screenshots there to be viewed, and not to be read.

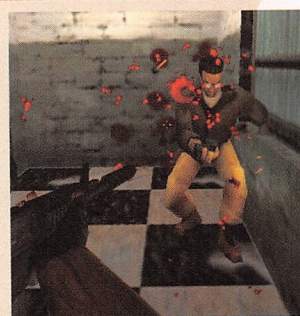
James Loftus

If you don't like them, then don't read them. We are not sure what else to say. Except, maybe, this reply is too long.

KEEPING ME SANE

I am currently stationed on an RAN frigate, and off on another mercy mission to save lives. I would just like to thank you and your staff for keeping me sane whilst being away for months at a time. I don't know how I do it, being an avid gamer, and

LETTER OF THE MONTH



BEING BOMBARDED WITH ARTICLES...

I hate online games. I tried the Quake series and hated it. I tried Ultima Online and hated it (No surprise there - Ed). I have been on the Net for over four years now and have never really given online games any thought whatsoever. For the most part, the 'deathmatch' bores the crap out of me and Net gaming I always thought as slow and complicated to get into.

I had some spare time recently and after being bombarded with articles in various publications over the last six months, decided to give Counter-Strike and Team Fortress Classic a go. I am going to come right out and say this...

They are the most incredible gaming experiences of my life. I may not buy another game for the rest of my life; CS and TFC have enough meat on them to last a lifetime. Never before have I experienced such a feeling of excitement and comradeship playing a PC game.

These games are reason enough alone to buy a PC and your gaming life will never be the same again... and that's a promise.

Chris Bowen

Jeremy Irons

Justin Whalin

Thora Birch

Marlon Wayans



DUNGEONS & DRAGONS

THIS IS NO GAME

IN CINEMAS JAN 2001

REP
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A DIVISION OF BUCKLE UP! LIMITED

www.dndmovie.com



Office of Film and Literature Classification
THIS FILM IS YET TO BE CLASSIFIED

BYTE SIZE

As anyone who has played Deus Ex knows HUNTING PIGEONS KICKS ASS. I once spent two whole hours sniping them and only stopped because all the little buggers went extinct on me.

Matt Snow

See?

not being able to use my PC for months at a time. Can you imagine, just reading about all the new games coming out, and not being able to play them until the ship arrives back home? Keep up the good work.

Leading Seaman Wells

JUST TO PLAY A MOD

A moment silence please for those brave people, the mod makers. They work tirelessly into the dark hours, making something that takes a lot of energy, courage, talent and quite often money, just so our little game goes beyond its singleplayer and its deathmatch/standard multiplayer. Truly, mods are now a normal part of gaming life. I know some people who buy a game just to play a mod they hear so much about.

Praise to Sierra for taking Counter-Strike under its wing, and nurturing it so that it takes the mod world by storm. If there are any other developers out there, listen up: mods *are* the future for games, so take it into your plans, and ask yourself, "Is this game mod-able?"

Sniper

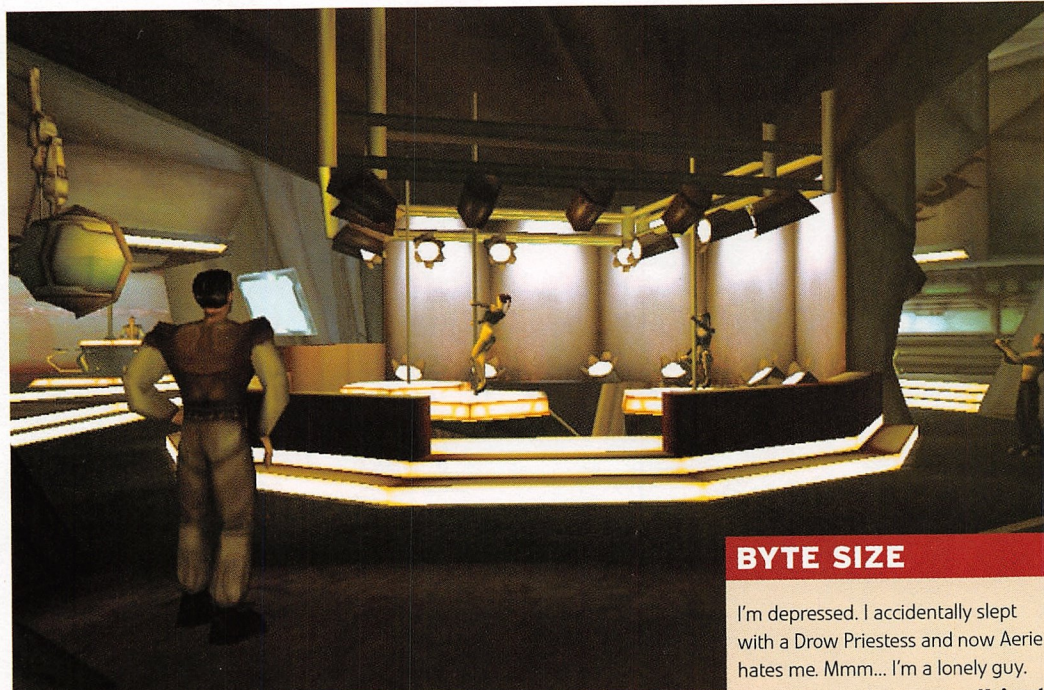
As long as they don't use it as an excuse to not do their job properly and design a bare-bones game, then we agree.

AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPER

Just a line to bring to attention the fact that, while your article about MMORPGs (PCPP#55) was informative, you didn't mention Bigworld: Citizen Zero, currently in development by Microforte. Even though it is an Australian developer, you must have mentioned at least five that were made by overseas developers.

Fabry

As you go on to state, we have covered BigWorld extensively - including this issue (see p41) - and will no doubt do so again in the future. Perhaps its omission from that feature was unfortunate, but you cannot accuse us of ignoring the very promising title.



Bigworld: a gratuitous screenshot from Microforte's online world

THIS ISN'T A JOKE

After searching the net for three hours I didn't even get a word relating to Ultima X. Is what you said on p129 of PCPP#55 even true? Am I gullible? Please tell me this isn't a joke. Us Ultima fans can only hope...

Tim Townsend

Yes, you are gullible.

BYTE SIZE

The new CD layout is great. It doesn't take so long to start up now. The person responsible should get a prize.

Colonel Klink

Just wait til you see the next one!

AN ABSENCE OF SOUND

I was sitting at home surfing the web, when I came across a demo of an adventure game called Sanitarium. I proceeded to download this demo, as I wondered how I had never heard of the game that was released in 1998. Published by ASC Games and developed by Dreamforge Entertainment, the demo was not without its charm, but did not offer anything new. I decided to give it a chance though, and went down to the local computer games store to see if I could purchase the game. "I've never heard of it," said one shop owner. "I played the demo but it never came through here," said another.

At this point I was ready to give up, but I decided to do a search of the net

for it. A quick search resulted in warez. Not really caring about the whole issue of piracy but also not being an advocate of it, I downloaded the game. Although there was an absence of sound and cutscenes, I found it to be one of the best adventure games I have played.

The point of this letter is though, why was it not released in Australia? I would still like to buy the game.

Dimitri Panaretos

Published by the relatively small ASC, Sanitarium struggled to gain release outside Europe. Adventure games still perform reasonably well there, despite lacklustre sales elsewhere, including Australia. Sadly, the same fate befell the best adventure in recent years, The Longest Journey. You ought to be able to find both at a good online store, with any luck.

MAJOR TRAFFIC

A lot of hype has been going on lately about the ADSL connections that are now available. I'm sure it's way better than conventional 56K modems that a lot of people still use. But is the Australian infrastructure really able to cope with such a large amount of traffic?

So far I've found a few ISPs that provide ADSL - the main one was Telstra, of course, and the other was iPrimus. Both offer an unlimited MB plan, which is good to see, but it seems iPrimus has the upper edge for speed.

Are other ISPs offering ADSL yet? And is it better to stick with Telstra, because it provides the service anyway?

BYTE SIZE

I'm depressed. I accidentally slept with a Drow Priestess and now Aerie hates me. Mmm... I'm a lonely guy.

Kaivaal

That's one way of putting it.

Also having the unlimited MB plan is good to see, but really will the ISPs keep it that way? I know the cable modem community still has its unlimited service so hopefully the ADSL plan will stay like that as well.

LeeBros

We suspect ADSL will soon adopt a "reasonable use" policy, as the cable services have done recently. Right now, ADSL is probably still priced out of the reach of most people. But if your budget stretches that far, then go for it.

LEGALLY ENTITLED

I've noticed that around the world it seems acceptable to return a game to its place of purchase if you're unhappy with it and feel that it doesn't live up to expectations. I've tried this before and been told that I can't return the game once I've bought it, for copyright reasons. Are they legally entitled to deny a refund or replacement? What are our rights as consumers?

Mark Waring

Different stores throughout the country have different policies regarding returns. Most will allow you to return a game that doesn't work on your system, while some may even permit it simply because you don't like it. However, always make sure you ask about the situation before you buy.

LIVE AT LAST!



FROM DECEMBER 18

PC PowerPlay.com.au

ALL THE NEWS, ALL THE REVIEWS, ALL THE TIME



Server

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE INTERNET

Southern Cross Cable

A NICE NEW BIG FAT PIPE. SMOKE UP, JOHNNY!

Though we're part of the first world (well, at least mostly), geographically we're still comparatively remote to the major western powerhouses of Europe and America. The internet, and electronic communication in general, is often touted as a way to get around our locative problem from these major sources that inform our culture, by making the distance involved seem much less, or at least not as far as it is in reality. Generally speaking, the internet has come a long way to achieving this, but as internet usage has exponentially increased the bandwidth to the US and Europe hasn't been able to keep up. As a result, up until a short while ago there were far more

Australians (and New Zealanders) making use of the data link to the US than there was bandwidth available.

Enter Southern Cross Cable, a joint venture by Telecom New Zealand (50%), Cable and Wireless Optus (40%), and MCI Worldcom (10%), that has recently completed laying a big, fast, fat ("phat", surely? - Ed) set of pipes to the US. To get an idea of just how big and just how fat these pipes are, the previous link carried up to 1 gigabit per second. SCC can carry 120 gigabits per second.

Well, it can't carry that much just yet - it hasn't been fully implemented apparently. But the effects of the

huge increase in available bandwidth should prove to be very beneficial to end-users.

Firstly, and most obviously, is that with less congestion, home dial-up users through cable/ADSL users to those using a fast internet connection from work should see at least a slight increase in transfer rates from US sites and data repositories.

Secondly, previous to SCC, ISPs wanting to make use of overseas pipes had only a limited choice in their top-tier service providers, and data prices were naturally relatively high. With far more players purchasing and re-selling bandwidth through the SCC cable link, there should be an increase in competition and a drop in prices for the end user.

All you can eat

Expect ISPs to begin offering far more cheap 'all you can eat' dial-up packages once the flow-on effect kicks in, and for a similar effect for the burgeoning ADSL (and to a smaller degree, cable modem) markets, too.

Also, the SCC link network operates in what's called Synchronous Digital Hierarchy (SDH) ring architecture. Its built-in redundancy feature means that if one section of the network is broken or malfunctions, the link remains active, with only slightly diminished bandwidth (see picture). As the November outage of the SE-ME-WE (Southeast Asia-Middle East-Western Europe) cable link demonstrated recently, until now Australia has relied heavily on a single data link and when it goes down, pandemonium ensues.

DEPTH CHARGE

So, is there just lots and lots of BNC cable under the water - or what? The specifications of the SCC are really quite cool. Over 30,000 kilometres of optical fibre cable was laid at depths of up to 7.5kms beneath the surface during the rollout, which is especially impressive given the make-up of the cable itself. The optical fibres are set in a steel tube and coated in jelly (no, not the Aeroplane variety) to protect against water penetration, then encased in steel and seam-welded copper and insulated with polyethylene - as well as the inclusion of extra layers of galvanised steel just for added protection. Repeaters, or optical amplifiers, are added in to the cable at intervals between 40 and 70 kilometres to boost the signal, and all up it is expected that 'ping' rates to the US could be as low as around 70ms - a major improvement.

The project has cost a reported US\$1.2 billion and taken over three years to implement. But it looks to have been a smart business move (as well as a boom to us poor old end users), with SCC already licensing the use of the newly available bandwidth to the tune of US\$1.2 billion, and there's still a heap more available. To give you some idea of the kind of prices involved, a mere \$10.3 million will secure you access to a 155 megabit circuit between Sydney and California for fifteen years (which is less than \$2000 per day). And you would have even received an 18 percent discount if you'd bought before November 2000, too.

High speed Jinx

FREE BROADBAND ACCESS ON THE HORIZON?

Though free dial-up internet accounts have yet to really make an impression (or at least make a *good* impression) in this country, a new Melbourne-based startup called Jinx is in the process of attempting to attract funding to offer a free cable broadband service in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane in the near future.

The model for the service is much the same as with free dial-up providers: your access to the internet is free in return for leaving an ad banner on their computer. Obviously, Jinx plans to reap the revenue from selling advertisements on its banner network to offset the costs of the user's data. However, given that the free dial-up

ISPs are still yet to make any inroads into the consumer market, the continuing downtrend in banner ad revenue, and significant downturn in companies willing to spend their advertising budget on banner ad placements, the premise does seem rather audacious. In fact, it's not even clear who Jinx will be partnering with to physically use the cable network, and nor is it clear where Jinx expects the necessary startup funds to come from.

Users would be charged a setup fee of \$400 for the cable modem to be installed, and then would be subject to an Acceptable Use Policy that is eerily evocative of Optus@Home's. In fact, it's exactly the same as O@H's - word for

word, with just the company names changed. Jinx aims to have acquired over 50,000 subscribers by early 2001, and then to roll out the service around mid 2001. For more information you can have a look at the magnificent web page www.jinx.com.au.

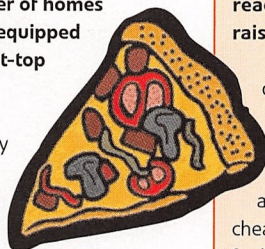
ITV

T-COMMERCE APPROACHES, PIZZAS EMERGE FROM TV

Despite the major concerns many Australians have over the introduction of Interactive TV (ITV) and the Digital TV model that our benevolent and uncorruptable Government has 'chosen' to implement for ITV, free-to-air networks look set to introduce interactive content from as early as mid this year. There is, however, a question mark over the number of homes that will actually be equipped with Digital TVs or set-top boxes by then.

Nevertheless, trials are currently underway in Orange, NSW where local residents are enjoying interactive news, weather, business and sports channels through their set-top boxes as well as accessing the internet through a dial-up connection. Originally supposed to finish late last year, the trial was extended when broadcasters such as SBS and WIN television as well as Pizza Hut became involved in trialling their own content.

And thus the newest buzz word on the block, T-Commerce (Television Commerce) emerged, with Pizza Hut setting up a pizza ordering system application for the trial allowing triallists to order their pizzas through the TV.



Searched the web for console cheat Results: 1 - 10 of about 75,000 Search took 0.31 seconds



Float

CHEATERS HOTLINE GOING PUBLIC

Sirius Telecommunications, probably better known to gamers as the producers of the 'Ultimate Cheaters Hotline' and developers of the Official Australian and New Zealand Dreamcast webpage are ready to float the business on the stock exchange to raise around A\$56,000,000.

Though in the US and Europe, game development and publishing companies tend to organise their hints and cheats line in-house, the Australian market isn't really large enough to warrant such an approach. This has allowed Sirius to capture around 92% of the Australian timed pay call 'hints and cheats' market for console games and they supply the service for both Sony and Sega-Ozisoft, with Nintendo the only console company still supplying their own call centres.

With the growth of the internet and the connectivity offered by 'next-gen' consoles, many casual gamers will for the first time be able to access the vast unofficial hints and cheats for



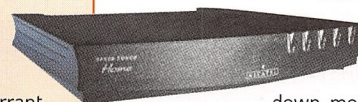
games online. It seems likely that Sirius will use part of the funds raised from the listing to attempt to engineer a major internet presence to combat this possible fall-off in call centre usage.

Growth

AUSTRALIAN DSL SUBSCRIBERS TO TOP TWO MILLION BY 2004, SAYS IDC

Research for IDC Australia has released a report that suggests DSL subscribers will outstrip cable modem users by almost 4 to 1 by 2004. IDC expect DSL proliferation to grow by 350% per year to reach around 2.1 million subscribers in three years time.

IDC also expect 2001 to feature a major take-up of DSL



services by consumers as prices come down, more providers enter into the market, and access speeds increase. Telstra will be forced to relinquish their monopolistic rights to the local loop network in August of this year, allowing a raft of new entrants to the field - adding competition and theoretically pushing access prices down.

In comparison to the predicted 2.1 million DSL users, IDC expects the cable modem userbase to expand to only around 500,000 by the same time.





Masters of the Web

THEY'RE THE NAMES BEHIND SOME OF THE ONLINE GAMES COMMUNITY'S MOST POPULAR SITES, AND THEY WIELD A LOT MORE POWER THAN MANY WOULD ASSUME. BRETT ROBINSON MEETS THE FACES BEHIND THE NAMES

At the infamous Gamer's Angst Compound, under the watchful eyes of the besieging FBI and DEA agents, PC PowerPlay convened a meeting with the masterminds behind the most popular game-related web sites on the planet. In attendance were some of the most influential figures in the online gaming community, whose

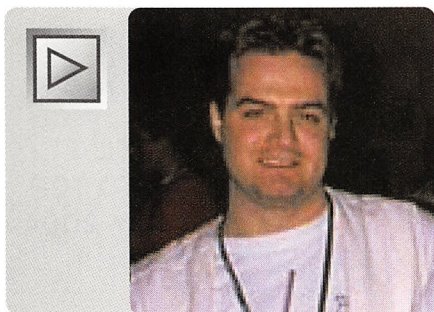
sites range from the definitive news source, Voodoo Extreme, to the infinitely entertaining Something Awful.

Sites that fall into, nay define, every conceivable gaming site category: from the PR Manager's absolute nightmare that is Fatbabies, to the ultimate simulation site, SimHQ. And, of course, our three most gracious hosts, Stepto, Spanky and

Umberto Echo, were also on hand to inject their unique sentiments (as well as voluminous quantities of alcohol) into the proceedings. We spoke at length to each of these industry personalities, and then collected their thoughts on the state of the online gaming community, their own personal experiences, and their predictions for the future.

BILLY "WICKED" WILSON

Co-Founder and Editor in Chief
www.VoodooExtreme.com



PCPP: What sort of commitment is involved in the day-to-day running of Voodoo Extreme?

BW: Most people don't realise that in running a gaming news site, you have to be committed all of the time: 24 hours a day, it's on your mind. Weekends, holidays, it's quite a task, to be honest. Now that I've managed to pull a few more guys on board, it's much less stressful, but we still have to be totally committed, otherwise, the competition will spank our asses.

PCPP: Do you feel that Voodoo Extreme has had a tangibly positive or negative impact on the industry itself?

BW: Both, actually. In some instances, I have said something negative about a product, or said something else that I probably shouldn't have, and then received calls from lawyers telling me that I have caused a stock scare! This happened at least twice and, believe me, it really sucked. Other times, though, I have hyped up a product, and it has performed well, and I think that's cool. Half-Life is an example of this, as we were hyping it up a ton, before it really caught wind. It worked out quite well. I have learned, though, to research things a ton more than I would before: I don't just shoot off my mouth as much as I used to!

PCPP: What would you consider to be the most rewarding aspect of running Voodoo Extreme?

BW: Really, the recognition, when a well-known type of developer drops you a line, or when a developer updates his .plan with a Happy Birthday wish. Just to be known is really a very, very cool thing. Being a bit of an introvert, that's something I never expected I would dig on. Also, the email I receive from people who like the site: it's really a very good feeling. It makes you feel like a sailor with cash in the orient... wanted.

PCPP: With many sites being swallowed up by hosting giants, do you feel that the gaming web site community is becoming more like a corporate entity; that it has lost its independence?

BW: It's almost impossible to become a well known site without some type of backing: just the server/hosting alone can put any person in the poor house. We have definitely had our share of crappy networks to be a part of, but have learned our lesson. More and more sites, including very large networks, are starting to question the entire network model. We were fortunate in hooking up with a start-up company, headed up by guys who know the biz quite well, that has its feet on the ground, and is branching out. Companies that are purely internet seem to be having problems right now, so we could see a nasty shake-up soon. I think a lot of sites, though, have lost their independence as networks typically control, to a degree, the content, and without a doubt, own all of the content.

RICH "LOWTAX" KYANKA

Founder and Webmaster
www.SomethingAwful.com



PCPP: What compelled you to take an active part in the online gaming community?

Lowtax: I was really into Quake 2 at the time, and I was young and naive. After realizing that working at Gamespy is nothing like what they want the public to believe, I decided to exercise my right to get fired by insulting my boss' incompetent friend. Of course I did it in a tasteful and adult way; a process that I can't describe here because of the many key words that would be edited out. I decided that I wanted to continue writing and vaguely cover the gaming scene, so I started up Something Awful: a site that would be dedicated to whatever interested me.

PCPP: Do you feel that a community spirit prevails within the gaming web site arena? Is there genuine inter-site and inter-host-network rivalry, or do gaming site operators tend to get along well with one another?

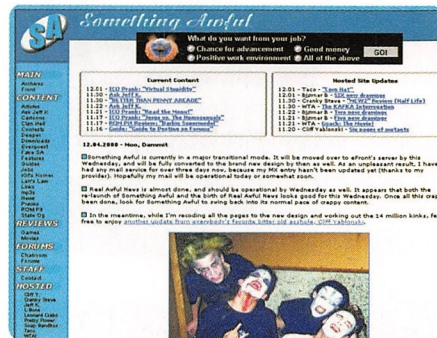
Lowtax: Definitely. All the other webmasters I've been in contact with have been more than generous and friendly, offering any help possible. sTeve from Shugahshack, Chet from OldManMurray, Tycho from Penny Arcade, Steve and Kyle from HardOCP, all these guys are top notch. I would include Stile from The Stile

Project in that list, but his site isn't really game-related and falls into the "horrible, horrible things that will scar you forever" category. As for rivalries, there aren't too many juicy stories out there, and the ones that do exist I really can't discuss publicly.

PCPP: With many sites being swallowed up by hosting giants, do you feel that the gaming web site community is becoming more like a corporate entity; that it has lost its independence?

Lowtax: Not really. The "Hosting Gold Rush" is pretty much over now, and the giants who scooped up tons of net property are burning through their bank accounts faster than a pound of crack cocaine at a "Diff'rent Strokes" reunion special. With the exception of networks like IGN, Snowball and Gamespy, there isn't really any loss

of individuality when joining a new host. Hosting networks understand that the critical element to a site's success is the person behind it who produces the content, and they'd have to be a pretty crappy company to disregard that.

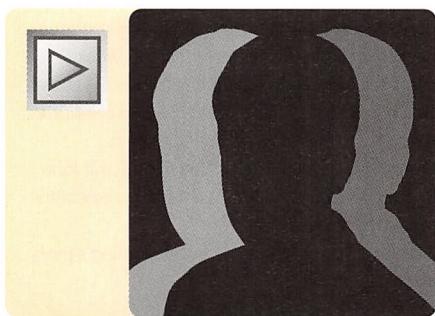


PCPP: What are your predictions for the future of the online gaming community?

Lowtax: There's going to be a continued, exponential growth in EverQuest-type online games. The majority of people would much rather go online and journey with a group of people from across the globe, as opposed to picking up a machine gun and shooting them in the face. Not me, though; I prefer emptying a few clips into some sucker's skull. Oh yeah, that applies to my choice in games as well.

FATSLICKY, FATBANGO AND FATTISSIMO

Founders and Editors
www.Fatbabies.com



PCPP: When did you first become involved with the gaming industry?

FatSlicky: Each of us Fatties started early on with the Atari 2600, the Mattel Intellivision and the Colecovision. We also played games on old Apple IIe computers with greenscreens. Career-wise, however, we all began in the early 90's at various entertainment software companies.

PCPP: What compelled you to take an active part in the online gaming community?

FatTissimo: Friends, and a rather fetching young lady I met in a chat room known only as "Ingrid." She was mysterious, saying only that she was

Swedish, about six feet tall, that her measurements were 36-25-34, and that she had the most adorable Adam's apple. What a WOMAN!

FatSlicky: Uh, yeah. Between the four of us, we have a number of contacts within this industry. Just chatting with them, other friends, and bringing up the infamous "Did you know..." question was the start of Fatbabies. We kept asking each other, "Wouldn't it be cool if we did a gossip site?" And so, Fatbabies was born.

PCPP: Did your success come as a complete surprise? Or were you convinced that you had a marketable product from the outset?

FatSlicky: We're successful? We did it for fun to reveal information and rumors for our friends in the industry. We've had some stirring, controversial stories and articles, and some killer rumors (such as breaking the Microsoft acquisition of Bungie). Sometimes info we have turns out to be false, but, hey, you win some, you lose some.

FatBango: When you're working with really talented, unconventional, fun people, success is inevitable, and the less talented (*FatTissimo: heh*) become successful by association. But after prison, any success is both a surprise and a blessing.



PCPP: Do you feel that Fatbabies has had a tangibly positive or negative impact on the industry itself?

FatSlicky: We think our site helps those in the industry identify stable or appealing companies to work for. The message boards are also an area where developers can ask questions and exchange ideas. Our site helps the little guys (the workers) at the expense of the company managers and executives.

PCPP: With many sites being swallowed up by hosting giants, do you feel that the gaming web site community is becoming more like a corporate entity; that it's lost its independence?

FatSlicky: All we know is that Fatbabies will be, and will continue to be, to the Gaming Community what Special Forces are to the Military: highly trained, well funded, and ready to kick ass at a moment's notice.

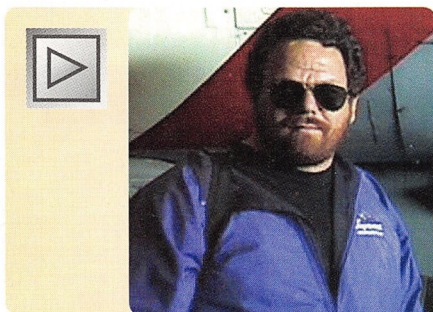
PCPP: What are your predictions for the future of the online gaming community?

FatSlicky: EverQuest can't last forever, and Ultima Online 2 will turn out to be a big bust and flop in a major way. Less specifically though, the online community will continue to grow, provided the technology and the games exceed demand and expectations.



DAN "CRASH" CRENSHAW

President of SimHQ
www.SimHQ.com



PCPP: What compelled you to take an active part in the online gaming community?

Dan: An obsessive/compulsive personality? Actually, I enjoyed writing about subjects that I was involved in. There has always been a desire for people to know what is going on, on the inside. I get a feeling of satisfaction from helping folks out as well. I have spent way too much of my life with simulation related subjects, hardware, software and such, all in an effort to make the games more fun and immersive. I hope that my writing about my successes and failures in my quest for more realism and atmosphere will help someone else make an educated decision on their next purchase or endeavour.

PCPP: Do you feel that SimHQ has had a tangibly positive or negative impact on the industry itself?

Dan: I think that we have made a very positive and noticeable impact on the community and industry as a whole. I have been told by several industry figures that we are considered as one of the more trusted and objective sites on the web. We also look at the industry from both the inside and the outside. Being very avid simulation enthusiasts, the reason we do this in the first place, as well as now working within the industry, we can offer a perspective that spans both sides of the fence.

PCPP: What would you consider to be the most rewarding aspect of running SimHQ?

Dan: Hands down, people thanking us for what we do. I enjoy nearly all aspects of running and dealing with the site, but the positive feedback from readers is the icing on the cake for me. When someone tells me they don't buy a product, regardless of what other reviews they have read, until we review it or write and ask us to review a particular product, that's a big boost. Again, that stems from the fact that we are, to a staff member, fanatical enthusiasts.

PCPP: What are your predictions for the future of the online gaming community?

Dan: The future of on-line gaming is definitely a bright one. As the technology of hardware and broadband progresses, on-line gaming will become one of the primary focuses for many new games. The ability to interact with humans in the gaming environment is second to none in any gaming experience available. Also, as technology progresses, we will undoubtedly see more detailed and more complex environments created.

STEPTO, SPANKY AND UMBERTO ECHO

Compound Inhabitants
www.GamersAngst.com



PCPP: What compelled you to take an active part in the online gaming community?

Umberto: I'm not so sure it's what you would call an active part. Unless you mean being actively reviled. Or actively being sued, maybe?
Stepito: Actively getting hate mail? I dunno. See, here in America, we don't pay a lot of attention to people actively screeching about the fact that breast implants do not a level designer make.
Spanky: Oh please, you know you'd bang her.
Stepito: I was talking about Tim Willits.
Spanky: I know.

PCPP: Did your success come as a complete surprise? Or were you convinced that you had a marketable product from the outset?

Stepito: I think they think that we make money on the site.

Umberto: America is the only country where a black man can earn enough money entertaining white people that he could pay for surgery and treatments to turn himself white, only to find himself ridiculed as a freak by both white people and black people. I've never been surprised at our success.

PCPP: What would you consider to be the most rewarding aspect of running Gamer's Angst?

Stepito: You know how in American Beauty at the end of the movie the guy refuses to bang the young chick because she's a virgin?
Spanky: We get to screw her brains out every night!
Umberto: Don't listen to them. The best and most rewarding part of running the website is knowing that if anyone ever reads it, we're going to get the shit sued out of us.
Spanky: Well, yeah, I mean that's the mark of success in our country: getting the living fuck sued out of you.
Stepito: I hope to have my valuables seized.
Spanky: Your Michael Hutchence "tie me up" doll is not really considered valuable.

PCPP: What are your predictions for the future of the online gaming community?

Spanky: This ridiculous industry will continue to make heroes and celebrities out of people who don't deserve it. The buying public will continue to get screwed over by the patch-of-the-week syndrome. People will continue to make websites.
Stepito: By the making of heroes and celebrities who don't deserve it, we don't mean us.
Umberto: Right. We're talking CliffyB and John Romero here, not us. We deserve to be celebrities more than they do.
Stepito: We are, in our own way, gaming's most important heroes.

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Mod Life

SPOONMAN'S MONTHLY ROUNDUP OF ALL THE LATEST MOD NEWS



NEED FOR SPEED

For StarSiege Tribes
Developer Blade and Enforcer
Release v0.36
URL www.planetstarsiege.com/nfs

A lot of people have said they would play Tribes, but it's just too slow and the weapons aren't varied enough. Blade and Enforcer has realised this, and souped up the Tribes experience to add a whole lot more punch to the overall package. Firstly, everything has been accelerated by quite a margin. It's not exactly talking Quake here, but it's not too far off. Secondly, a lot of new weapons and equipment have been added to spice things up.

Weapon-wise there's about seven new guns including a Nuke, Flame Thrower and something called the "Nasty Gun", which can only spell destruction. You can also deploy quite a few different turrets as well, such as the flame turret, the rail turret and the force turret which pushes people long distances. Rounding off there is also new vehicles. If you gave Tribes a miss because it was too slow, now might be the time to dust off your armour and get back into it.



MADNESS

For Quake III: Arena
Developer A team with no name
Release Public Beta
URL www.planetquake.com/madness

Madness is one of those Mods that just oozes class in a way few mods do. It doesn't completely change the game world or add any new spectacular concepts, but it just has that "thing" about it which makes you sit up and take notice. Weapon-wise, basically all the weapons from Quake, Quake 2 and Quake 3 are included, plus a flame thrower. This may not sound that spectacular, but these weapons have secondary fire. We're talking homing rockets, the return of the good old BFG and exploding shells to spice things up. It's a good thing lots of things explode because no one can deny these explosions are probably the best ever seen in a mod, or in a full game for that matter. Go to the Option screen and see for yourself the massive amounts of graphical enhancements you can turn on. You gotta love that BFG mushroom cloud. To go along with the weapons there's also loads of great powerups as well. All of this is just what's been implemented so far. In the works are new gameplay types such as Realism mode, Mario mode and Spider mode. Little is known about these yet, but they do sound great. Madness is a wonderful mod.



STARCRAFT UT

For Unreal Tournament
Developer Team SCUT
Release TBA (Expected July)
URL www.planetunreal.com/starcraftut

StarCraft UT has only just entered development, but looks like it will be one of the hottest mods around if the feature list has anything to do with it. Let's just hope they can live up to their promises. StarCraft UT is only around 10% complete at the moment, so there aren't even any screenshots available, but the promised features blow me away. Obviously this mod is based on the StarCraft universe and will eventually have both a single and multiplayer version, with the latter coming out first. The game allows you to be a member of either the Zerg, Protoss or Terran forces and features driveable vehicles, destructible terrain, all new StarCraft weapons, player classes voice acting, buildings from StarCraft that you can enter, and the list goes on. The biggest thing they are trying to achieve is the singleplayer version. Not only will it have 20 levels, but it will actually contain a story as well as ingame movies. Whether or not they will actually be able to pull this off remains to be seen, the features just seem to get more and more elaborate as time goes on. In true Starcraft style, it will have big outdoor areas and accommodate a four team, capture the flag scenario, I can just imagine some of the frantic battles that are in store. Whether you are a Unreal Tournament or Starcraft fan, I am sure you will enjoy this mod.

Mod of the Month



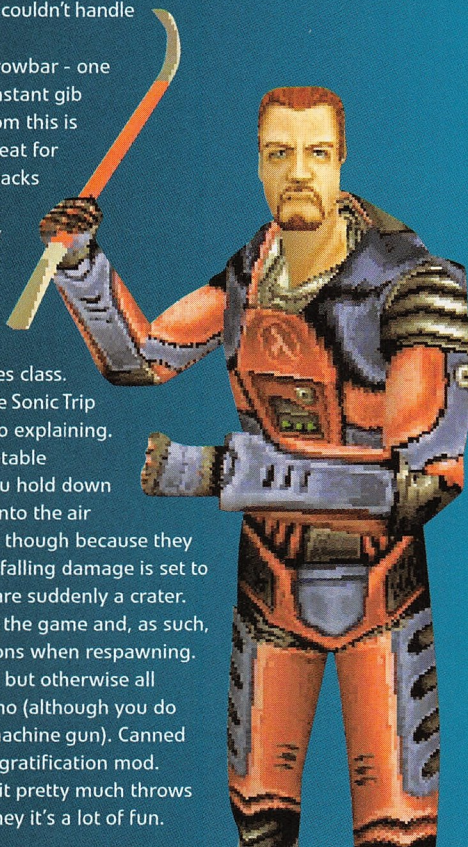
CANNED TUNA

For Half-Life
Developer randomnine
Release v1.55
URL www.half-life.net/randomnine

Canned Tuna is one of those "shoot everything that moves, and if it doesn't move, shoot it until it does", smash everything with as much firepower as possible mods. Hence the name, I guess. The first thing that you will notice about this mod is that it only has five weapons, that's right only five. After using them though you realise that if there was any more you just couldn't handle the firepower.

Firstly there's the trusty crowbar - one hack from this will give you instant gib gratification. Following on from this is the Laser Cannon, which is great for long range attacks and also packs quite a punch. Moving right along we have a high velocity machine gun, which is certainly the weapon of choice for air-to-air combat, and the beefy mortar launcher that just oozes class. Last, but not least, there is the Sonic Trip Mines which certainly need no explaining.

Canned Tuna has many notable features: when jumping, if you hold down the jump key, you will fly up into the air using your jetpack. Be careful though because they are quite hard to control and falling damage is set to realistic; fall too far and you are suddenly a crater. There is no weapon pickup in the game and, as such, you are armed with all weapons when respawning. You are given two trip mines, but otherwise all weapons have unlimited ammo (although you do have to change clips on the machine gun). Canned Tuna is very much an instant gratification mod. There are a lot of deaths and it pretty much throws realism out the window, but hey it's a lot of fun.



Spoonman's LAN Diary



NERDFEST www.galaxy.net.au/mjk/cancon

Location Canberra ACT

Date 24/1/2001 - 26/1/2001

Players 300

Price TBA

What better way to celebrate our great nation's birthday than in the National Capital, fragging to your heart's content. CanCon is a festival run every year in Canberra for War and Card Game players. This year they've branched out to accommodate a 300 player LAN party as well. Not bad. 72 hours of gaming with 300 other people is an experience you don't want to miss. Don't expect to see li'l Johnny down there in between debates and opening nurseries, but I guess you never know your luck with the PM.

TASTYLAN V www.tastyland.com

Location Dapto NSW

Date 18/2/01

Players 30+

Price \$10

TastyLan is held in sunny Dapto at the Dapto Leagues club, it's only ten dollars for a full day of gaming and also offers all the comforts of the Leagues club as well. This includes a very funky Bistro and the option to drink alcohol as well if you're of drinking age. TastyLan holds a few different tournaments and seems to promote games other than Counter-Strike, which can only be a good thing if you're as sick of Counter-Strike as I am. How could a LAN claiming to be Tasty be bad? It can't.

LAN OUT LOUD (LOL) members.dingoblu.net.au/~dnite

Location Melbourne VIC

Date 5/1/00 - 6/1/00

Players 50

Price TBA

Lan Out Loud are a new Lanning venture looking to hold LAN's in the Eastern Suburbs of Melbourne. The two options so far are in the Malvern Area or the Boronia Area. Lol is standard fare for over night LANs with some tournaments, prizes and some funky sponsorship to go along with it. It's hard to start up a new LAN group so go along and support this new venture. There isn't a great deal of information available at the moment but keep checking back as their infrastructure grows and their support base increases.

FRAG www.frag.gen.nz/index.php

Location Auckland NZ

Date Monthly (TBA)

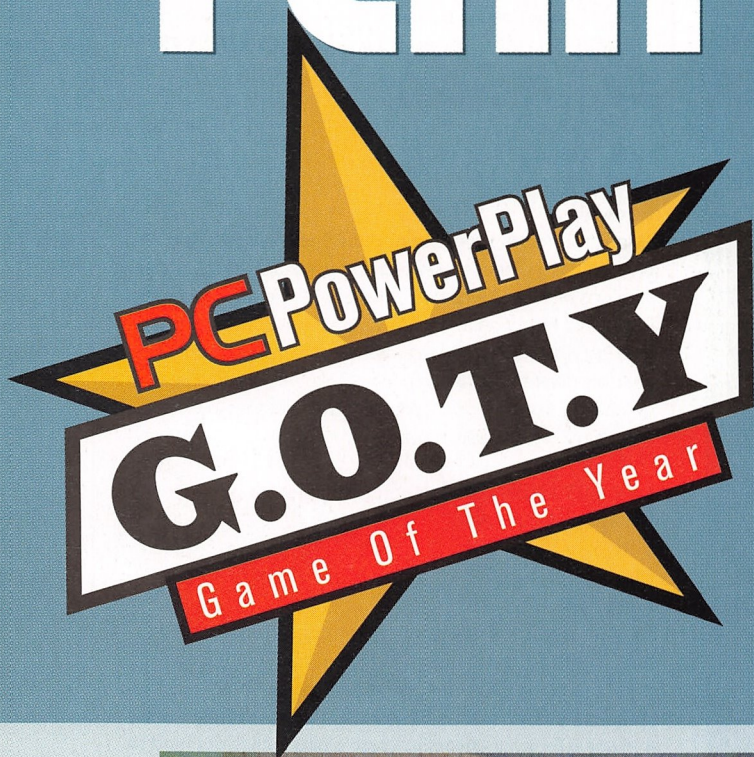
Players 65

Price \$10 for non-members

Finally, the shaky Isles gets a guernsey, proving PC PowerPlay is a truly international concept. Anyway, this LAN is held every month in the old Commonwealth Games athlete's village from 1990 which has great nostalgic value for those of us who remember. The LAN is fairly standard and compares with most of what you'd find in Australia, which basically means you're not missing out if you're from New Zealand. One thing you do need to know is that you're required to bring your own cable. Having said that, they do accommodate for coaxial cable as well as twisted pair, so if you only have a coaxial cable you're not going to miss out.

For submissions, email spoonman@next.com.au

GAME OF THE YEAR 2000



We know how it is. Every month you look at the Top 20 chart in **Spotlight** and think, "Who the hell buys these crap games?" or "Croc?!?!"

Like it or not, sales figures remain one of the most democratic means of determining the best games around. But it's not the most democratic - and certainly not the most accurate. That privileged position is of course held by the annual PC PowerPlay Game of the Year awards, now in its 4th year.

The Game of the Year is where you guys have your say. Previous winners, such as *Diablo*, *Starcraft* and *Half-Life*, have gone on to become multi-million selling blockbusters since securing 1st place in your hearts.

This year we're doing things a little different. We want you to select your ten favourite games of 2000 (in order of preference). Hopefully this will enable us to even more precisely calculate the victorious title.



LAST YEARS GOTY WINNER!

half-life

HOW TO VOTE

So, what you need to do is write the ten games in the space provided on the opposite page, and then send it in to:

**PC PowerPlay
GOTY Vote
78 Renwick St
Redfern NSW 2016**

OR

Vote online @:
www.pcpowerplay.com.au

Take a look at the Score List on p84 for the complete list of eligible games. Oh, and don't forget that the games we review this issue can be voted for, too!

Closing date for all entries is January 30th, 2001, and the winners will be announced in PCPP#59, April 2001.



GAME OF THE YEAR

Voting Form Liftout

BEST GAME OF 2000

1. _____

WHY IS THIS THE GAME OF THE YEAR?

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____

YOUR DETAILS

Name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

State _____ Country _____

HOW TO VOTE

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PLEASE CUT ALONG DOTTED LINE

WIN! A Creative Nomad Jukebox



If having your say in the most prestigious games award isn't sufficient reason to fill out the voting form, then the prospect of winning a prize should be incentive enough. Especially when said prize is the Creative Nomad Jukebox.

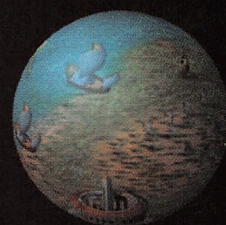
One voter, drawn at random, will win the phattest portable Mp3 player available today. With a massive SIX GIG storage capacity, the Jukebox puts all other contenders to shame. It's great, and we know you want one. The only catch is that you'll have to fill the voting form in its entirety, which is hardly even a minor hindrance. So what are you waiting for?

Special thanks to Creative for making this promotion possible.



001

A GAMES ODYSSEY



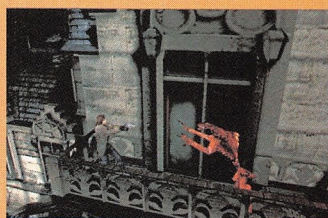
THERE WILL BE HUNDREDS OF GAMES RELEASED THIS YEAR.
SOME WILL SHINE, WHILE OTHERS WILL FAIL TO CATCH YOUR EYE.
ALLOW US TO GUIDE YOU TO THOSE WHICH WILL BURN BRIGHTEST...



AGE OF SAIL II

GENRE Realtime Strategy
DEVELOPER Akella
DUE February

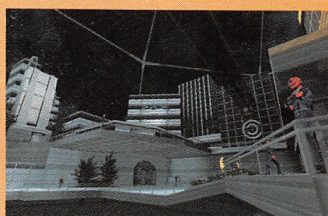
In capturing the spirit of the era, this sumptuous, 18th century, seafaring RTS may well prove more engaging than its alarmingly mediocre predecessors, Buccaneer and Man of War.



ALONE IN THE DARK

GENRE Action Adventure
DEVELOPER Darkworks
DUE June

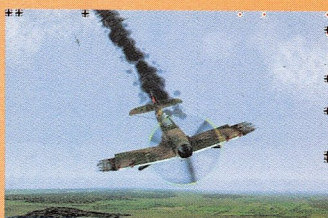
Incredible visuals and heart attack-inducing gameplay are sure to make this fourth incarnation of the Alone in the Dark series the best one yet.



ANACHRONOX

GENRE Roleplaying
DEVELOPER Ion Storm
DUE March

Ion Storm's futuristic RPG isn't at all similar to Deus Ex, but thanks to its emphasis on player immersion and a compelling plot, it could be just as good.



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

GENRE Flight Sim
DEVELOPER Rowan Software
DUE January

From the developer of Mig Alley, Battle of Britain will accurately simulate the air war between Axis and Allied pilots during the summer of 1940.



ARCANUM

ROLEPLAYING MAGIC - AND NOT ONLY FOR THE FAITHFUL

While fantasy games are a great diversion from the real world, there is something too static about them. The primary participants never seem to alter. The big red dragon inevitably has the most gold; the evil magic-user is always wizened; and the brawny barbarian is regularly as thick as a battleaxe.

Thankfully, Troika Games is developing Arcanum: of Steamworks and Magick Obscura - a game that drags these fantasy stereotypes kicking and screaming into the industrial revolution. Here, in the world of Arcanum, the forces of magic duel with the pure, hard facts of technology. Fireballs fizzle when flying towards scientists armed with

deniability ("That's impossible!") and magic-users derail trams by their mere presence as the locomotives suffer a lack of faith in gravity.

To help capture the essence of Arcanum, Troika scoured the literature of the period and came up with a few 18th century inventions, such as electrically charged healing rings, to place into the game. Even the stories and newspaper articles are told in the old English language so the 'Jack the Ripper' feel is truly captured.

One of the most exciting things about Arcanum is that it is being created by the developers of Fallout, one of the most character-rich PC series to date. Like its ancestors, Arcanum will not have predefined character classes. Instead, the types

DETAILS

GENRE Roleplaying
DEVELOPER Troika Games
DUE 1st Qtr

of skills that are accrued during the game will determine the future of each character - and weak charismatic players need not fear. Well-spoken characters will be able to convince NPCs (non-player characters) into surrendering their treasures and the less diplomatic will be able to pound everyone to a pulp and still finish the game. How's that for roleplaying!

Even the multiplayer scenarios allow you to be yourself. There is no longer any reason for players to stay together in a game - each person may go anywhere they like, including dungeons and big cities. With this kind of opportunity, it will be very possible for would-be assassins to lie in wait for any online killing opportunities and thieves can easily part the unwary from their material possessions.

With the promise of immense replayability and character variation, Arcanum looks like the first RPG to get in 2001. Roleplayers can finally let go of the mightily muscled moron and start grooving with a gangly smooth-talker for a change. If Arcanum delivers half of what Troika claims, it's reasonable to assume that it will generate a lot of sleepless nights across Australia. Bring on the coffee!



BIG WORLD: CITIZEN ZERO

ONE GAME THAT CERTAINLY LIVES UP TO ITS NAME

The name may change by the time of the retail release of this home grown gem, but it's going to be a hard job finding another nearly as apt. Literally, Microforte is developing a *big world* for us all to jump into and play, so they called the game *Big World*. You gotta love the Australian penchant for beautifully evocative names, donchya? But we're not just talking about a huge and empty playing space, because *Big World* will have the capacity to hold up to around an estimated 50,000 players on a single shard. Now that's big. *Everquest's* maximum is around 2,000, to give you some sort of perspective.

But, as you may have been told before (possibly at a particularly embarrassing moment), size isn't everything. Happily, *Big World* is more than just big; though Microforte is almost unknown outside Australia, and though it lacks the established track record of many other high-profile developers currently working on MMOGs, the feature set for BW is easily a match for anything else in production.

It's not a stats-based fantasy RPG, for starters. Set in the near-ish future, there are only three races to choose from; a cyborg race, aliens, or human, with the emphasis much more upon players evolving their character and

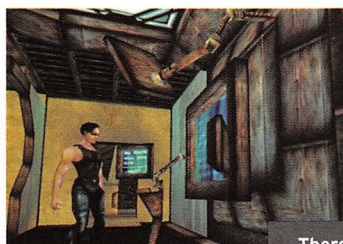
DETAILS

GENRE Online World
DEVELOPER Microforte
DUE TBA

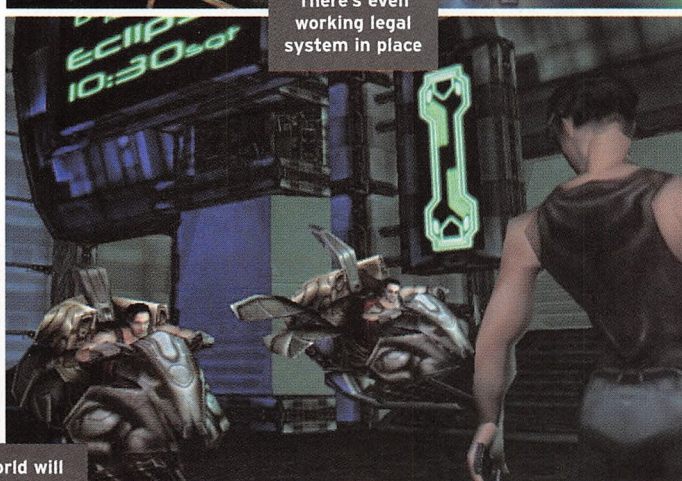
taking part in the intricate storyline than always lusting after the next experience level for better spells and weapons. There will be missions a'plenty however, both for team-based quests as well as missions and occupations tailored for those who enjoy their solitude - smugglers or traders, for example.

Microforte has set the bar very high, and is attempting to pull off what other MMOGs have thus far struggled to really achieve - a world

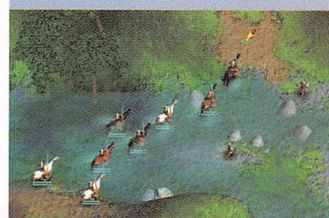
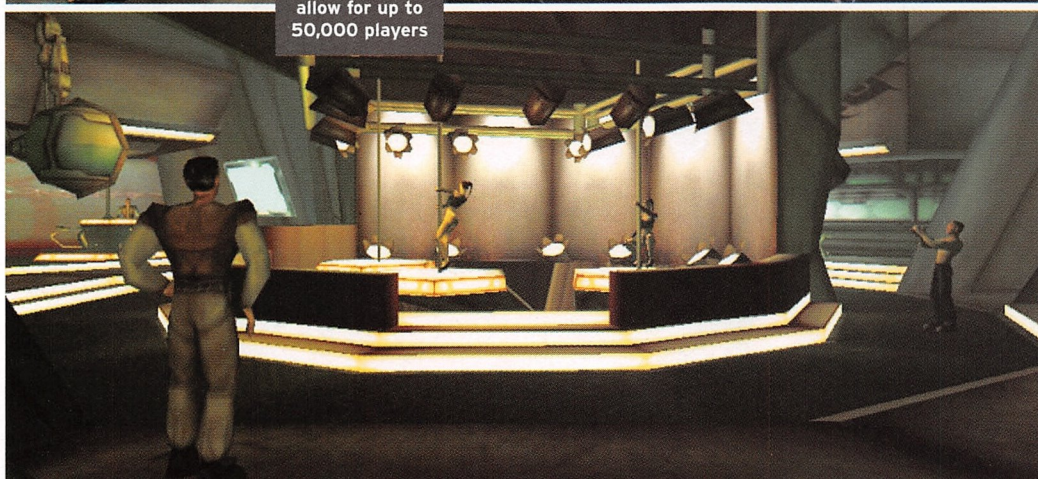
where the economic basis is interlinked to the legal system, the large corporations that control different areas of the game, the shady underworld, the political sphere, major guilds, sub-guilds, sub-sub-guilds, and all the way down to solo adventurers. It's an absolutely massive task to design a real and sustainable 'cause and effect' system, especially if *Big World* does manage to support tens of thousands of players at a time. But from the early development work that has gone into the game, it is looking very likely that this talented team may well be the first to make a truly 'alive' online game world. Here's hoping!



There's even working legal system in place



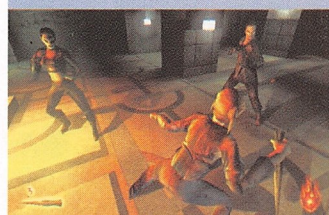
Big World will allow for up to 50,000 players



BATTLE REALMS

GENRE Realtime Strategy
DEVELOPER Liquid Entertainment
DUE 3rd Qtr

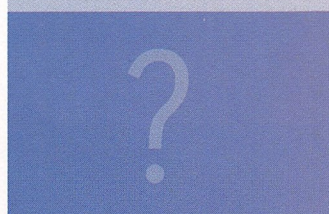
An RTS title set to eliminate the classic gameplay focus on economic efficiency, bringing strategic deployment of units back into the equation.



BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

GENRE Action Adventure
DEVELOPER The Collective
DUE March

Buffy fans rejoice! How well this TV-to-game translation will fare is anybody's guess, but we're confident in The Collective's ability to deliver a quality product.



CIVILIZATION 3

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Firaxis
DUE 3rd Qtr

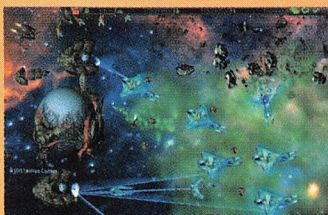
The final chapter in Sid Meier's Sweep of Time trilogy, Civilization 3 will offer diplomatic interaction to put Alpha Centauri to shame.



C&C: RENEGADE

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Westwood
DUE 4th Qtr

Finally, a chance to play C&C from a completely different perspective. We don't relish the thought of taking on a Flame Tank, though.

**CONQUEST: FRONTIER WARS**

GENRE Realtime Strategy
DEVELOPER Digital Anvil
DUE TBA

The future of this space-based RTS is uncertain after Microsoft reneged on its publishing deal with Digital Anvil. Hopefully another publisher will step up to the plate soon.

**DESPERADOS**

GENRE Tactical Strategy
DEVELOPER Spellbound
DUE 2nd Qtr

A game best described as Commandos with a Wild West theme, Desperados looks set to give the people at Pyro a run for their money.

**DRAGON RIDERS**

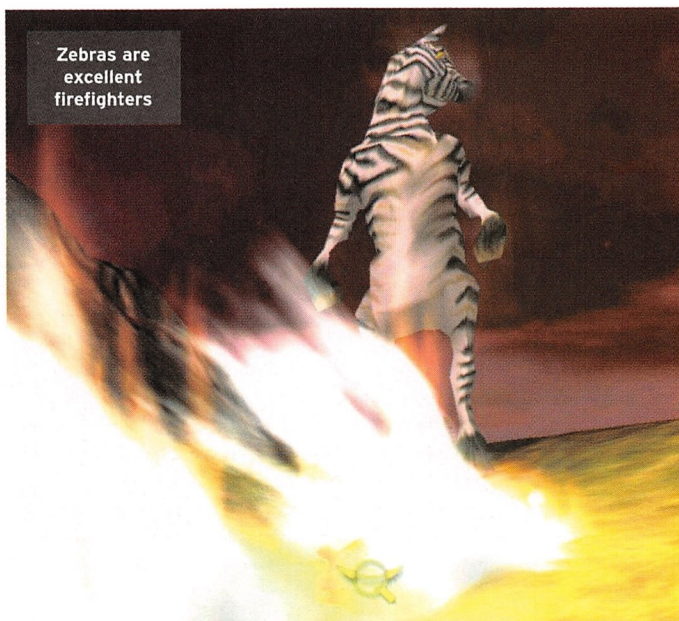
GENRE Action Adventure
DEVELOPER Ubi Studios
DUE March

Yet another game based on an Anne McCaffrey series, Dragon Riders will see the player adventuring in a strange land, aided by - surprise, surprise - a loyal dragon.

**DTR: SPRINT CARS**

GENRE Racing
DEVELOPER Ratbag
DUE January

This intriguing simulation of the world's third most popular motorsport looks very promising indeed. Track deformation and carnage will be highlights, as will the graphics.



BLACK AND WHITE

YOUR CHANCE TO 'BE' A COW

Black and White gives you a living world called Eden, a generous double-armful of powerful spells, an enormous, all-powerful creature limited only by your abilities as a parent, and a bunch of little guys to squish.

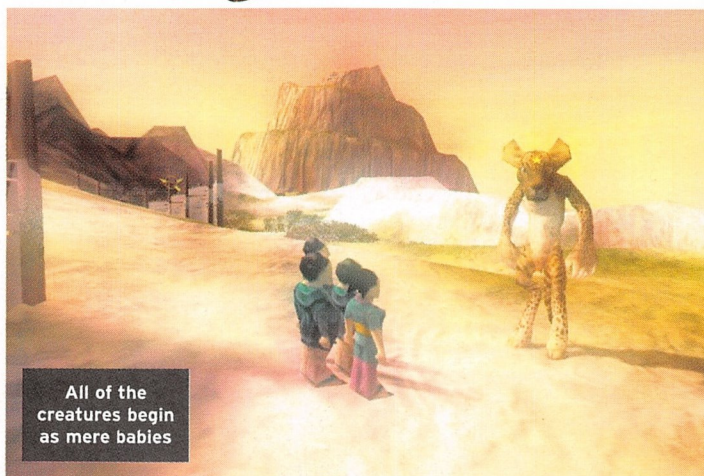
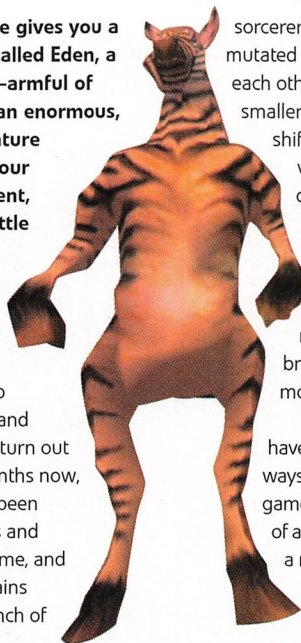
Given this is a new kind of game creating a new genre for itself, it's difficult to predict how Black and White will actually turn out in the end. For months now, PC PowerPlay has been bringing you news and previews of the game, and while its core remains unchanged - a bunch of

sorcerers use enormous magically mutated creatures to dominate each other in a virgin land - the smaller gameplay details keep shifting as Peter Molyneux's

vision evolves through the development cycle.

Whatever the result though, Molyneux will have produced a game that brings something new to the industry, set to break the suffocating genre mold of the late nineties.

But even genre-busters have roots. So yes, in some ways Black and White is a god game, in that you play the part of a sorcerer freshly arrived to a new world, where you manipulate the natives to gain dominance over

**DETAILS**

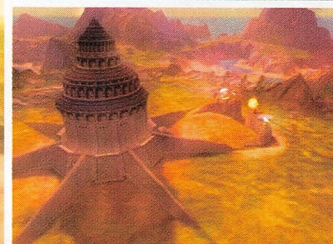
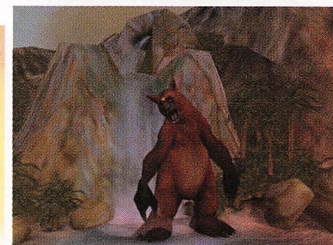
GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Lionhead
DUE March

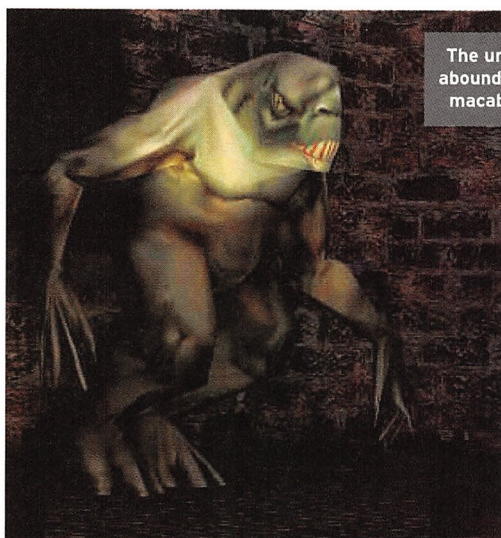
other sorcerers. There's also a passing stylistic resemblance to Populous, the archetype of god games. Even an element of RTS as well, in that the game is played in realtime, and you must battle other sorcerers for territory and resources. And an active imagination might even equate the game to Creatures, given its focus on rearing and developing a Titan.

But it's the combination of these ideas that makes Black and White something very new. And for the first time, it looks as if a developer is poised to truly harness the power of the mouse as an input device, with the game's revolutionary Gesture Recognition technology. The fluid, dynamic properties of the mouse will be used to 'paint' spells onto the game world, and your dexterity and exactness will determine the power and effectiveness of those spells.

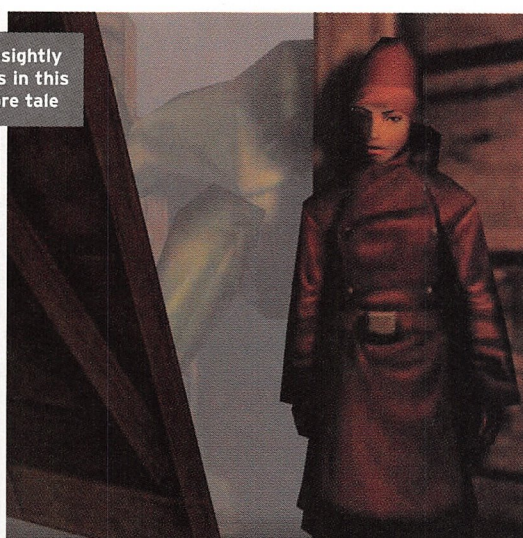
Black and White is a game of possibilities. Everything Molyneux says about the game has been accompanied by a wry smile, as if to say, 'You think this is cool? You ain't seen nothing yet.' Finding out what you can do in the gameworld - and being amazed by the level of interaction and effect - is sure to bring you back and back to the land of Eden, the hapless villagers, and the mighty spellcasting Titans.

Black and White. Bring it on.





The unsightly
abounds in this
macabre tale



CALL OF CTHULHU

WHERE UNPRONOUNCABLE WORDS LURK IN THE SHADOWS

HP Lovecraft is regarded as the seminal influence on horror in all its forms. His tales of a universe ruled by ancient god-monsters who are, at best, indifferent to mankind have touched every single writer of morbid tales since the 1920s.

Lovecraft's stories are built on the fundamental premise that the universe is a black and hollow chaos and humanity is utterly irrelevant to it. Only scholarly research can lead to clues about the universe, usually via the dread book 'The Necronomicon'. Translations to cinema, comics, theatre and even videogames have all failed to bring his claustrophobic stories to life.

But that was then. With the success of games such as Half-Life, Alone in the Dark and Gabriel Knight - as well as countless other titles built on atmosphere and brains rather than an engine, a rocket launcher or a few boring clues - the time is now right for Lovecraft to be transferred properly to PC.

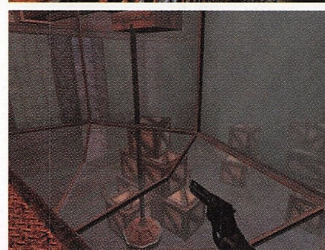
None of these games have got much in common with the other, it's true, but they all succeed in creating something best described as *tentative* gameplay. Gabriel Knight games grow slowly more detailed and tense, until the final scenes can be quite harrowing. Alone in the Dark had you scared to open doors

because you knew, just knew, that there was something horrid around the corner. And you have only to have had those damn headcrabs leap up at you from nowhere to realise that suddenly you were playing Half Life tentatively.

So, an action roleplaying game is what we can expect from Headfirst Productions' Call of Cthulhu. Imagine the detailed character rendering and monster design of Half-Life, the crafty problem-solving of Gabriel Knight, and the sheer four-in-the-morning-no-sleep-till-next-puzzle Alone in the Dark gaming. Add the quality storytelling of a Planescape Torment, then put it together with the trappings of Lovecraft. The horror, the eternal trap that is knowledge and the one simple fact that salvation equates damnation.

If this game is done correctly, allowing itself to draw on quality writers and illustrators and doesn't

back down on horror, keeping the ultimate Lovecraftian tentativeness, then we envision a potential game of the year contender. The only fear is that instead of all this, we will end up with an Elvira: Mistress of the Dark.



DUKE NUKEM: END SPECIES

GENRE Hunting
DEVELOPER 3D Realms
DUE 2nd Qtr

3D Realms' answer to Deer Hunter - subtitled Endangered Species - will undoubtedly cause some consternation amongst animal lovers. It's time to collect pelts and chew bubblegum, and we're all out of gum.



DUNGEON SIEGE

GENRE Roleplaying
DEVELOPER Gas Powered Games
DUE 3rd Qtr

A dazzling 3D RPG that does away with many of the annoying traits of conventional RPG's, and is set within a truly seamless world.



EMPEROR: BATTLE FOR DUNE

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Westwood
DUE 4th Qtr

A surprise instalment in the series, Emperor will bring the houses of Atreides, Ordos and Harkonnen to those unfamiliar with Westwood's seminal franchise. Heads up for the Sand Worm.



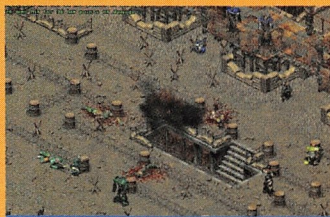
EVIL DEAD

GENRE Action Adventure
DEVELOPER THQ
DUE 2nd Qtr

The game based on the movie that made Duke Nukem famous. Break out the shotguns and chainsaws, and hail to the king, baby.

DETAILS

GENRE Action/Adventure
DEVELOPER Headfirst
DUE 3rd Qtr

**FALLOUT TACTICS**

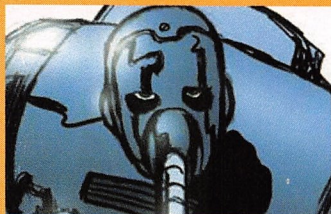
GENRE Tactical Strategy
DEVELOPER Micro Forte
DUE February

All the tactical action of Jagged Alliance, in the post apocalyptic world of Fallout. What more could any gamer ask for?

**FAR GATE**

GENRE RTS
DEVELOPER Super X
DUE 1st Qtr

A space-based 3D RTS from the award-winning, independent UK developer, Super X. A possible successor to the illustrious Homeworld.

**FREEDOM FORCE**

GENRE RPG
DEVELOPER Irrational Games
DUE TBA

A totally unique RPG which will allow the player to create their own comic book-style superhero characters. Take that, Aquaman!

**FREELANCER**

GENRE Space Sim
DEVELOPER Digital Anvil
DUE TBA

The future of Chris Roberts' epic space sim is in grave doubt following his departure from Digital Anvil, the company he set up (see Spotlight). Originally conceived as a massively multiplayer online universe, Microsoft deemed the project too ambitious for current technology. Will it ever be released? Dunno...

COMMANDOS 2

THE RETURN OF THE GAME THAT MADE WAR FUN AGAIN

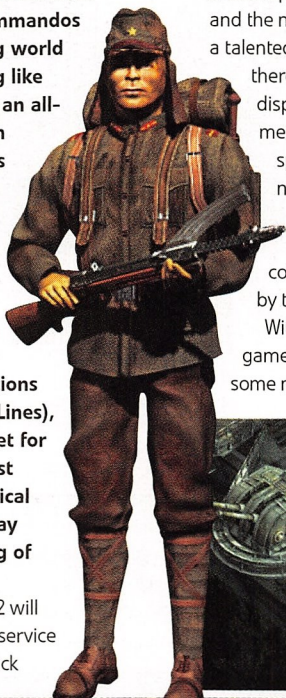
There's well over a million good reasons to be looking forward to the return of everyone's favourite dirty half-dozen. The original Commandos took the gaming world by storm, selling like Chupa Chups at an all-night rave. From the moment this heroic crew of highly trained military experts set foot on German soil in their first series of covert operations (Behind Enemy Lines), the stage was set for some of the most memorable tactical combat gameplay since the sinking of the Bismarck.

Commandos 2 will see the return to service of the original crack

team, plus three extra controllable characters, Natasha the seductress is set to make a return from the add-on mission pack Beyond the Call of Duty, and the newcomers are Lupin, who is a talented thief, and - wait for it -

there's also a dog at your disposal. Once again, team members will each feature specialist abilities, however now some of the more general duties, such as driving, swimming, and collecting objects are possible by the whole team.

With the redesigning of the game engine, also expect to see some major visual changes. The



The context-sensitive interface is intuitive

**DETAILS**

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Pyro Studios
DUE March

game's regular topdown view can now be seen from four opposing angles, making it possible to see what's on the other side of large buildings. Furthermore, gameplay will no longer be restricted to external areas, offering full 360 degree panning of building interiors, as well as underwater areas. One mission, in particular, takes place entirely within a multi-story building, featuring dozens of rooms to explore.

The missions this time will focus on the wartime battles towards the end of WWII, which took place not only across central and northern Europe, but also the Pacific and Asia region, plus there are also locations in the Arctic and North Africa. This variety in locations gives the graphic artists the chance to highlight the near photo-realistic background environments, which should look even better with three modes of resolution available.

Spanish developer Pyro Studios has already managed to singlehandedly set a new, still unsurpassed, level in tactical combat with the Commandos series. Combining a well-planned mix of engaging gameplay, a wider range of difficulty and AI, and a level of graphical detail that's simply awe-inspiring, there's no reason not to believe Commandos 2 will be one of the most rewarding gaming experiences yet.



EMPIRE EARTH

BRINGING THE TERM 'EPIC' BACK TO REALTIME STRATEGY

Viewed by those in the know as the title that will emerge as the pinnacle in Age of Empires-style gaming, Empire Earth exhibits the potential to become the must-have strategy game of 2001. Stainless Steel Studios' title takes the popular formula established by Ensemble Studios and makes some welcome improvements, the most notable of which is the inclusion of twelve distinct epochs. Each epoch will cover an important part of human history, from the club-wielding days when man first adopted an upright walking stance, all the way through to the Nano Age. It is in this epoch that technological advances will, according to the developer, see mechs adopted as the foundation of armed forces worldwide. Epochs between these two extremes will include the Bronze Age, the Imperial Age, the Industrial Age and many others.

Adding even greater appeal to this twelve-in-one game, it will be possible for the player to modify the attributes of each of Empire Earth's three hundred combat units. For land-based units, these attributes will include movement speed, attack power and armour strength, while airborne units will feature similar attributes like payload weight and deployment range.

Although Stainless Steel Games will be taking some artistic license in the simulation of some epochs - domesticated ostriches and giraffes will serve as beasts of burden for the

DETAILS

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Stainless Steel Studios
DUE July

cavemen, for example - an impressive degree of historical accuracy will be maintained in other areas. Thus, WWII bombers will be susceptible to attacks from AAA emplacements and enemy fighters because of their lumbering pace, and the crews of tanks with unusually large view ports will be vulnerable to sustained machinegun fire.

Empire Earth will ship with the comprehensive scenario editor used by the development team to create campaign missions, and a map editor that will allow the player to set the scene for each custom conflict. As evidenced by the screenshots, the game will also set the standard in terms of visual flair. Interestingly, the player will be able to

position the free-roaming camera over the "shoulder" of any combat unit, and watch each battle unfold from that uniquely personal perspective. With only a few months until its completion, Empire Earth will certainly give Ensemble Studios a run for their money.



Victory can be achieved via air, land or sea

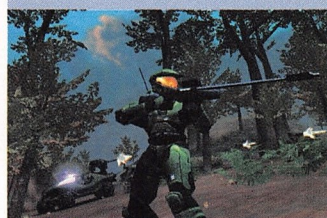


?

HALF-LIFE 2

GENRE FPS
DEVELOPER Valve
DUE TBA

The sequel to an incredible game that has spawned countless mods. Little is known about Half-Life 2, except that it will almost certainly be a contender for Game of the Year.



HALO

GENRE Multiplayer FPS
DEVELOPER Bungie
DUE 4th Qtr

Bungie's answer to Tribes is one of the most visually appealing games we've ever seen, and it's sure to have the people at Dynamix sweating.



HARPON 4

GENRE Naval Strategy
DEVELOPER SSI
DUE March

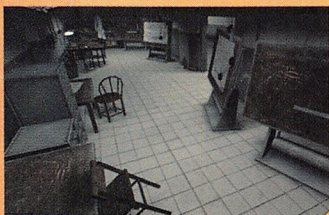
Complemented by superb visuals, this latest iteration of the classic naval strategy game will offer increasingly complex simulations of combat vessels and associated aircraft.



HELLBOY

GENRE Action Adventure
DEVELOPER Dark Horse Interactive
DUE 2nd Qtr

Based on Mike Mignola's comic book series of the same name, Hellboy will attempt to bring an edgy, black humour to the action adventure genre.



HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS 2

GENRE Tactical Action
DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks
DUE 3rd Qtr

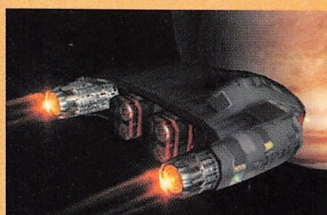
This time, those wily SAS operatives won't just be putting the smack down on the Nazis. Ne'er-do-wells in the jungles of Burma and the deserts of Egypt will cop it too.



HOSTILE WATERS

GENRE Action Strategy
DEVELOPER Rage
DUE 1st Qtr

A curious Action/Strategy hybrid from the creators of Incoming. We hope it turns out more like Battlezone and less like its forebear.



INDEPENDENCE WAR 2

GENRE Space Sim
DEVELOPER Particle Systems
DUE April

Gorgeous graphics, an intriguing plot and an exceptionally immersive game world are on the cards for the sequel to Particle Systems' Newtonian physics-driven space sim.



LEADFOOT

GENRE Racing
DEVELOPER Ratbag Entertainment
DUE 2nd Qtr

Dubbed "supercross on four wheels", Leadfoot will see the player race buggies and utes around tight corners and over huge jumps on treacherous indoor dirt tracks.



FREEDOM RIDGE

TAKING X-COM INTO THE THIRD DIMENSION

There must be a reason why intergalactic alien races always jump at the first opportunity they get to crush the inhabitants of Earth under their buggy Imperialist boots. Perhaps their electronic receivers picked up on a frequency carrying old Home and Away episodes from the 80s... back when Bobby was in it. Watching that would be enough to make anyone want to mercilessly slaughter millions of people. But whatever the reason, one thing is clear: aliens hate us and as **Dreamland Chronicles: Freedom Ridge** makes very evident, they hate us with a *passion*.

Taking place in the not too distant yet oh-so dystopian future, Freedom Ridge places the player in the heavily soiled combat boots of a member of the Terran Liberation Army. The TLA is an underground guerilla resistance group intent on taking back mother earth from the lizard-like claws of the Saurons - the said aliens and ruthless

DETAILS

GENRE Tactical Strategy
DEVELOPER Mythos Games
DUE 1st Qtr

galactic oppressors par excellence. It is your job, as a squad leader, to take control of a bunch of troops and lead them in various guerilla-style assaults on key strategic sites throughout the world, whilst simultaneously managing the strategic element inherent in Freedom Ridge's multi-faceted gameplay. Players must, before entering into the 3D squad action, do a bit of traditional RTS-ing by dispatching fighters to intercept alien starcraft while guiding human carriers to areas of importance for drop-offs. This is achieved via the Geodome, a globalised, rotatable view of Earth which, happily, includes lovely

touches such as simulated day and night sequences that, when combined with the spectacular 3D engine, make for an immersive and eerily realistic tactical/strategy jaunt.

With an impressive gaming lineage including the X-COM series, games that defined a genre, developer Mythos does not look set to disappoint with this latest instalment of tactical squad based hijinks. In fact, cheesy clichéd stories aside, Freedom Ridge looks set to be a highly absorbing and intensely enjoyable title indeed. Squad on!



GALLEON

I WANNA BE A PIRATE! OOPS, WRONG GAME...

After creating the original Tomb Raider, Paul Douglas and Toby Gard left Core Design in early 1997. The duo quickly formed independent development studio Confounding Factor and began work on their first game, the swashbuckling action adventure, Galleon.

Much as we might take pleasure in deriding the now tiresome series of near-identical Adventures of Lara Croft, it should not be forgotten just how remarkable that very first outing actually was. Whilst skilful level design satisfied the hardcore gamer, it was Lara herself - thanks to animation that portrayed her in a thoroughly convincing fashion - that captivated the wider community. As lead artist on the revolutionary title, Gard is perhaps the man most responsible for its success. Thus, it shouldn't surprise to discover animation is foremost among Confounding Factor's priorities for Galleon.

Stylish is the word that springs to mind when you first see the hero of Galleon, the ultra-dashing Rhama. With his lithe limbs, muscles all taut and sinewy, Rhama most resembles a gymnast or ballet dancer. Such an association is by no means accidental either, as both Gard and Douglas have stressed how the character movement in Galleon will be like no other game.

Complex techniques have been employed to ensure a seamless transition between animations - for instance, Rhama might be running along, then spot a weapon, pick it up and continue running, all without breaking stride. In addition, characters will respond to the environment in a realistic fashion, possibly adjusting their step when traversing the variables of rocky ground or not falling through solid wall when injured. Detailed facial expressions and lip movement will complete the picture.

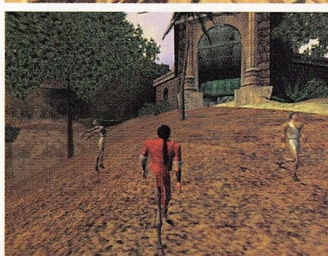
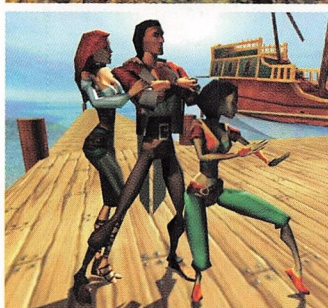
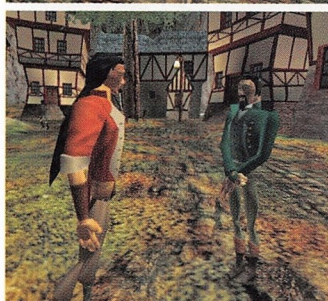
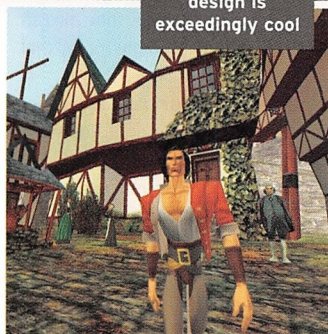


The stylised design is exceedingly cool

DETAILS

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Confounding Factor
DUE 4th Qtr

It's heartening to see Confounding Factor striving to break new ground in areas often neglected by polygon-obsessed developers. Complementing the advances in animation, Douglas is also working on a radically different way of controlling - or "guiding" - the main character. How this works in practice, little is being revealed. But you can be sure we'll be monitoring exactly how Galleon develops over the next twelve months.



LEGEND OF THE BLADEMASTERS

GENRE Roleplaying
DEVELOPER Ronin Entertainment
DUE 1st Qtr

Bearing more than a passing resemblance, graphically and gameplay-wise, to Final Fantasy VII, Legend of the Blademasters will be set within a similarly expansive world.



LEGENDS OF MIGHT AND MAGIC

GENRE RPG
DEVELOPER New World Computing
DUE 2nd Qtr

Set to revolutionise the Might and Magic franchise, Legends will use the Littech 2.0 engine to bring the game to life in sumptuous true 3D.



LOOSE CANNON

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Digital Anvil
DUE TBA

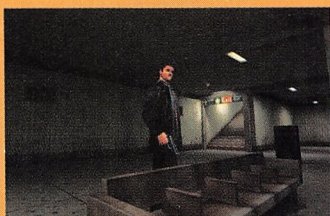
Similar in some ways to the upcoming Project Overdrive, Loose Cannon will place the player in the shoes of a bounty hunter operating in a world overwhelmed by crime.



MAJESTIC

GENRE Online World
DEVELOPER Electronic Arts
DUE 2nd Qtr

EA's next entry into the online-only market (after UO) looks a far more intriguing prospect. Players are drawn into a worldwide conspiracy and a gameworld which can be experienced via your mobile phone, fax or computer.



MAX PAYNE

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Remedy Entertainment
DUE May

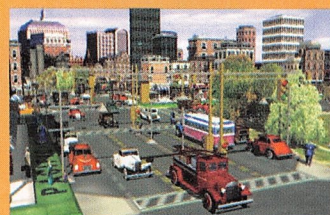
Recent rumours indicate that the PC and Playstation 2 versions of Max Payne may be abandoned in favour of developing it as an Xbox-only title.



MECH COMMANDER 2

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Microsoft
DUE 2nd Qtr

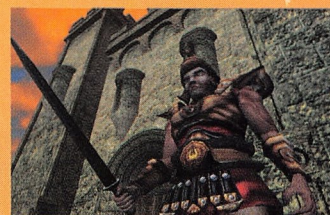
Thanks to the removal of the annoying quirks that plagued the original, Mech Commander 2 will undoubtedly offer the kind of fluid gameplay that its predecessor lacked.



MONOPOLY TYCOON

GENRE Boardgame
DEVELOPER Deep Red Games
DUE February

Monopoly Tycoon will combine gameplay and street names from Hasbro's classic boardgame with Sim City-style urban planning and construction. A curious concept, for sure.



MORROWIND

GENRE RPG
DEVELOPER Bethesda Softworks
DUE 4th Qtr

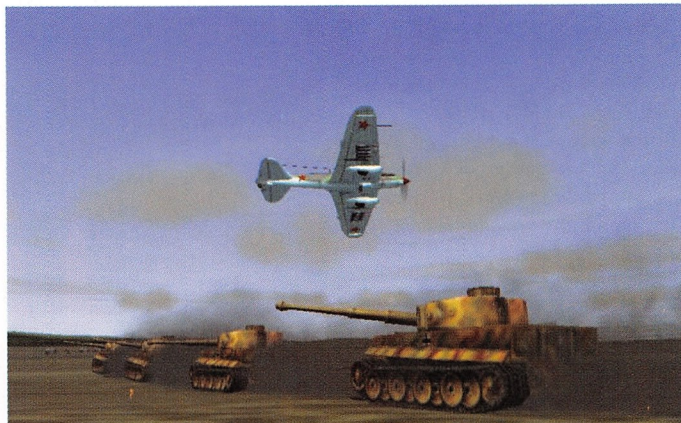
The free-form style of Daggerfall will be revisited with the release of this, the next instalment in the Elder Scrolls saga.

IL-2 STURMOVIK

FROM RUSSIA WITH TANKS

You may not have heard of this one yet, but you will. Spitfires, Wildcats, and Zeros are all very well, but award-winning Russian developer Maddox is offering gamers a whole new experience in 2001. Flight sims have concentrated on the European or Pacific theatres to date, largely ignoring the Russian Front where most of the fighting actually took place. Aside from marketing difficulties, this approach has been driven by a combination of Western lack of interest and a paucity of information on the Russian air war.

Enter IL-2 Sturmovik! Using unprecedented access to previously secret documents, Maddox is creating a painstakingly realistic simulation of Russia's famous tank-busting aircraft. And with a scalable flight model that incorporates over 500 flight parameters, including aerodynamic reaction to weapon firings and weight distribution, IL-2 Sturmovik should satisfy the most demanding desk-flying critic. Given Maddox's first principles approach to the whole game engine, this promises to be a new highpoint in flight simulation.



DETAILS

GENRE Military Sim
DEVELOPER Maddox
DUE 2nd Qtr

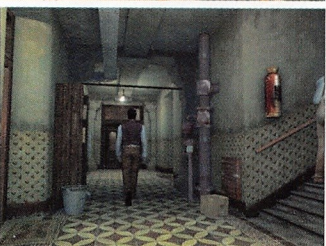
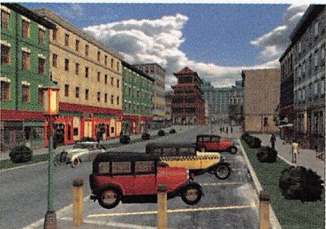
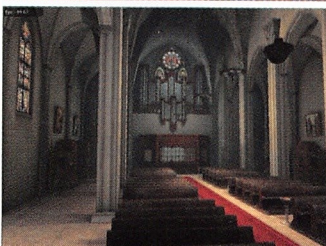
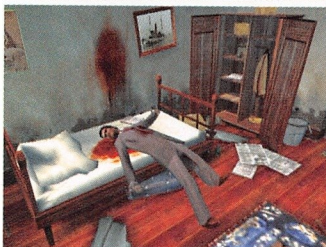
Players will fight through six historically-based campaigns, flying several variants of the Sturmovik and a host of other warbirds. MiGs, Yaks and Russian versions of US aircraft will be on show, as will BF 109s, Heinkels, Stukas, and Junkers. The grand total will be 17 player controllable aircraft, with 25 flown by the AI, while the

multiplayer game will support cooperative and competitive games of up to 32 players. As a bonus, tail-gunner missions can be flown with an AI pilot, and two players will be able to control a single aircraft online.

IL-2 Sturmovik should really stand out from the crowd on the ground. Terrain and vehicle modelling have generally been given short shrift by developers, with the emphasis understandably placed on air-to-air combat. Maddox plans to do both superbly, but the attention to detail in ground attack missions will be unprecedented. The 300x300km game areas are based on WWII maps, and the developer has likened the view to a 3D strategy game, with the AI controlling opposing forces on the ground. Dozens of ground vehicles will be included, each incorporating unique damage models, and the critical relationship between air and ground operations will drive much of the action.

With a superb flight model and a whole new approach to ground action, IL-2 Sturmovik will be the pick of 2001. Climb aboard Comrades - next stop Stalingrad!





MAFIA

GANGSTERS WITH MORALS

Tommy's working his way up the criminal corporate ladder. He has got more money than he knows what to do with, but - and here's the twist - he has also got a conscience.

Before you ask, Tommy, you must know, is a mobster, a gangster, a mafiosi. His hobbies include indiscriminately murdering people, racketeering and sentimentously debating the moral implications of these less-than ethical actions. He is a pin-striped, tommy-gun toting, cigar chewin' crime lord of the old-school model. And he's the main protagonist of Mafia, the latest opus from Hidden & Dangerous creator Illusion Softworks.

Prior to continuing, read the above paragraph again and look for the part where it mentions Tommy morally debating the implications of his criminal actions. That's the important part, pay attention to that. If it helps, imagine that it's underlined and in bold. Mafia is not going to be any "I'm sorry, what did you say? I couldn't hear over all the

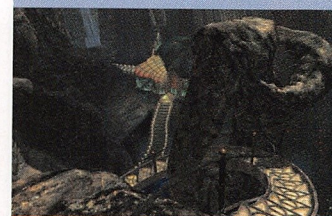
DETAILS

GENRE Action/Adventure
DEVELOPER Illusion Softworks
DUE 2nd Qtr

shooting!", Kingpin style gore-fest. What we're looking at here, ladies and gentlemen, is an intense stealth-action based game with a highly complex narrative. A narrative that gradually draws players into the glitzy yet dingy existence of the criminal underworld and forces them to consider that great, yet oft-neglected question: What would I do if I were there?

This desire to thoroughly immerse the player into Tommy's world is furthered by the immense game area in which the player is free to wander. Not unlike Project Overdrive, Mafia occurs in a massive 20km wide urban sprawl, bustling with pedestrians, interactive cars, trams and even the odd steamboat or two. It is here that the player will be able undertake a wide variety of mob-style missions, from the standard assassinate-the-fat-politician type through to racing old style Fords for cash at the local race circuit. Did anyone hear the word atmosphere?

Illusion Softworks has claimed it wants to create a game that would make people piss their pants even when they hear about it. Well, if you'd all excuse us, we'll have leave it there to change our undergarments.



MYST III: EXILE

GENRE Adventure
DEVELOPER Presto Studios
DUE March

The sequel to Riven - which was billed as the sequel to Myst, you may recall - Exile will surprise few with its contemplative, puzzle-filled gameplay. Journeyman Project creator Presto Studios has been charged with development duties this time.



NASCAR RACING 4

GENRE Racing
DEVELOPER Papyrus
DUE 1st Qtr

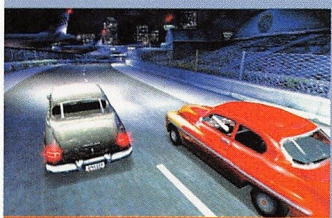
Under development by the people behind the incredible Grand Prix Legends. If anyone can make racing around an oval track fun, it's the wizards at Papyrus.



NEOCRON

GENRE Online RPG
DEVELOPER Reakktor Media
DUE TBA

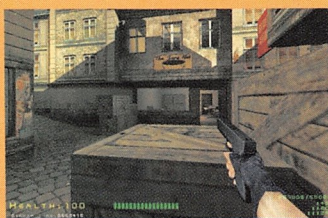
A MMORPG set in a futuristic universe not unlike that of Micro Forte's Big World. Sure to be blessed relief for those who are sick of dispatching orcs and goblins ad nauseum.



NEED FOR SPEED: MOTOR CITY

GENRE Racing
DEVELOPER EA Sports
DUE July

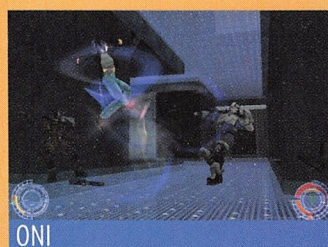
EA's ambitious online racing game will feature Gran Turismo-esque car upgrade elements, making it the perfect platform for longterm ladder competitions.



NEW WORLD ORDER

GENRE Multiplayer Action Sim
DEVELOPER Termite Games
DUE 3rd Qtr

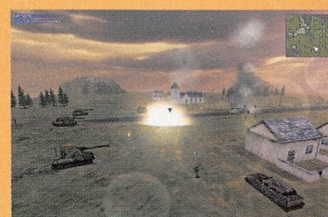
Play arenas bearing a striking resemblance to action movie sets will add to the appeal of this curious rival to the likes of Tribes 2 and Counter-Strike.



ONI

GENRE Multiplayer Action Sim
DEVELOPER Bungie
DUE January

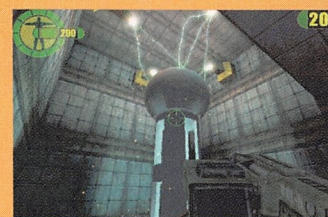
Tempering exploration and puzzle solving with a healthy dose of butt kicking, this anime-inspired game will pit the player against foes both human and robotic.



CONFLICT ZONE (PEACEMAKERS)

GENRE RTS
DEVELOPER Mathematiques Appliques
DUE April

A game where influencing the media and, in turn, influencing the civilian population, will be as integral to success as military might and an aptitude for warfare. Original title Peacemakers has been dropped in favour of Conflict Zone.



RED FACTION

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Volition
DUE May

Red Faction is the firstperson shooter PCPP's most desires. A compelling narrative, superb setpieces, a beautiful engine, and the ability to destroy the scenery all combine to bring us the most likely candidate to topple Half-Life and Deus Ex.



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

RECAPTURING THE TRUE SPIRIT OF ROLEPLAYING

Black Isle's RPG series' based on the Advanced Dungeons and Dragon rules have been a phenomenal success. It's no exaggeration to say that they have saved the RPG genre from oblivion by proving that richly detailed and immersive roleplaying games can sell, and sell well.

The 3D revolution that took over the games world when 3dfx introduced its first graphics accelerator card has mostly left the RPG world untouched, with a few notable and infamous examples such as Ultima IX and Vampire: The Masquerade. The main reason being that RPGs need so much development

DETAILS

GENRE Roleplaying
DEVELOPER Bioware
DUE 2nd Qtr

time to get the quests and puzzles right that there's no time to make a snazzy 3D engine as well.

As long time champions of 2D RPG design, Black Isle is now breaking the mould in going for an all-out immersive 3D experience, one designed from the outset to simulate the real-life multiplayer environment of a pen and paper game of AD&D. Neverwinter Nights will certainly be Black Isle's prettiest ever game with full camera rotation, cutting edge lighting effects and brilliant water effects that look good enough to dive into.

Neverwinter will, for the first time, allow Dungeon Masters to control the action in a multiplayer game in almost the same way that they do in the hardcopy game of AD&D. All the new 3rd edition rules have been

implemented, allowing the player to use all the new character classes and skills. Indeed, much care has apparently been taken to accurately portray the use and effect of all skills and abilities.

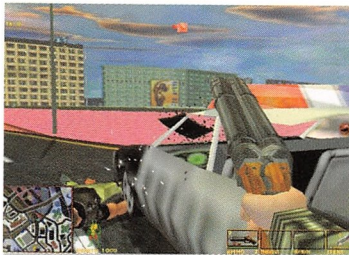
Probably the most exciting aspect of the game though is its modular design, which will allow the addition of new adventure modules, just like the pen and paper game. With the large fan base already out there, this should mean a constant flow of new adventures and, finally, an end to gamers reliance on developers to keep their favourite game alive.

63 people will be able to play Neverwinter Nights simultaneously. However, this begs the question of Interplay's previous commitment to supporting its online titles, with little more than a WON.net interface usually provided. If Interplay wants this title to go big then it will have to seriously consider establishing its own online presence or Neverwinter Nights could just turn out to be a big waste of time for most gamers.



PROJECT OVERDRIVE

PLAYGROUND OR VIRTUAL CITY? YOU DECIDE



I don't know about you, but I can poke a stick at a helluva lot of things. I can poke a stick at my monitor, I can poke a stick at my dog, I can poke a stick- really, really powerfully- at John Romero for releasing Daikatana... and that's to name but a few things. However, after browsing the preview pages for Project Overdrive- an FPS/racer hybrid which promises to be the hottest thing out of Russia since vodka and sliced potato, I can safely say that this game appears to have so many fun features that even the stick poking skills of world billiards champion, Efen Reyes, would be put to the test.

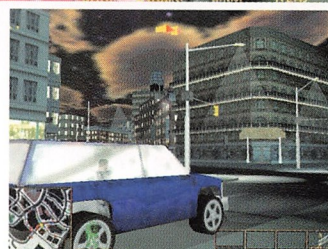
Developed by Russian software house, Vistage, the premise of Project Overdrive is simple- you've just got out of jail, now's the time to go about doing things which would get you sent back in there. In fact, the best way to think of this upcoming gaming juggernaut is to picture a much better looking, more in-depth Grand Theft Auto- and when you're done doing that, don't forget to remember that PO is entirely first person and set in a virtual city that would take 7 real-time hours to get across on foot. A



DETAILS

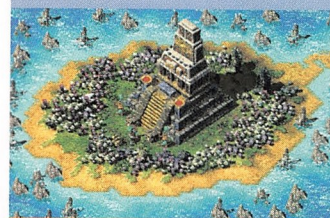
GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Vistage
DUE 2nd Qtr

city which is bustling with cars, bikes, busses and other such automotive goodies which the player can 'commandeer' (read: steal at gunpoint) in order to speed up his/her journeys in the immense virtual sprawl, which was constructed on a model of a real city using an advanced physics engine that would put Trespasser to shame. Atmospherically, this metropolis



consists of all the things one would expect from a seedy, industrialist crime haven- towering skyscrapers, dingy alleyways and a cramped, depressive suburbia ... all completely interactive and all detailed as much as we could want.

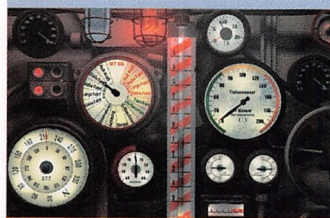
If you're wondering why you should be excited about this, just remember how much fun we all had when we first got our mits on GTA. Did you like being a ruthless criminal who answered to no one and was intent on underworld domination? Was it enjoyable randomly shooting innocents as you fled from the police after that bungled bank heist? Did driving cars at incredibly fast speeds through congested streets make you giggle like a schoolgirl? Well, take all those great experiences, make them destroyable, more intelligent and 3D render them because Project Overdrive is on its way.



SETTLERS IV

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Bluebyte
DUE February

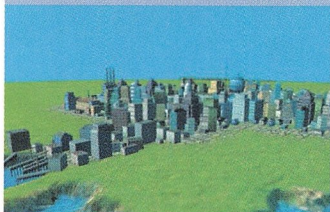
Postponed a couple of months (see Spotlight) to ensure all the bugs are thoroughly cleansed, Bluebyte's fourth 'little blokes' sim is destined to be the cutest of the lot. A deceptively complex strategy game if ever there was.



SILENT HUNTER II

GENRE Simulation
DEVELOPER SSI
DUE March

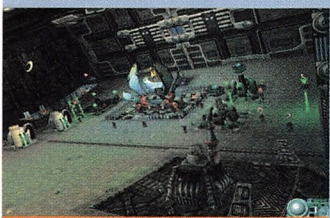
Come March we may finally see the perennially delayed submarine sim from SSI rise to the surface. It may well merely present the player with a vast array of dials and knobs, but you won't find a more nailbiting game this year.



SOVEREIGN

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Verant
DUE TBA

Rumours abound that Verant's massively multiplayer strategy title has been scrapped. However, the inside word is that it's undergoing a complete redesign. Don't hold your breath.



STARTOPIA

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Mucky Foot
DUE February

Managing a space station is all about keeping a diverse collection of aliens comfortable and relaxed. Expect a wacky, zany, madcap and deeply addictive experience from a bunch of former Bullfrog inmates.

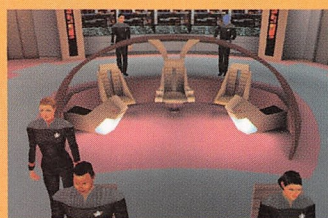




STAR TREK: AWAY TEAM

GENRE Tactical
DEVELOPER Activision
DUE March

Trek games have rarely strayed from deep space dogfighting, but much of the action in the series' takes place in terrestrial locations. Away Team attempts to rectify this imbalance with an excursion into X-Com style squad-based combat.



STAR TREK: BRIDGE COMMANDER

GENRE Space Sim
DEVELOPER Totally Games
DUE 2nd Qtr

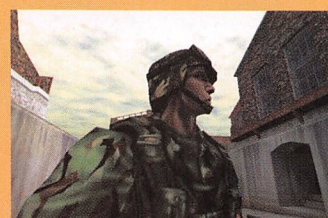
From legendary X-Wing creator, Larry Holland, Bridge Commander might play more like a people management sim than an action blast-fest. From the captain's chair the player orders the bridge crew through a mission-based adventure.



SUMMONER

GENRE Roleplaying
DEVELOPER Volition
DUE 2nd Qtr

A smash hit on PS2 late last year, Summoner pinches the best elements from traditional console and PC RPGs. This mix should hopefully provide a deep roleplaying experience complemented by strong characterisation.



TEAM FORTRESS 2

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Valve Software
DUE TBA

Another game in the process of a comprehensive overhaul. The old half-Life engine is gone, replaced by Valve's own unnamed creation, while the design focus is on ensuring the gameplay works as a firstperson shooter and realtime strategy title.

REPUBLIC: THE REVOLUTION

POSSIBLY THE MOST AMBITIOUS GAME OF THE YEAR

DETAILS

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Elixir Studios
DUE 3rd Qtr

Italian Renaissance philosopher, Niccolo Machiavelli, is renowned as the king of cynical political theory. His incisive treatises on the nature of political power and how one can acquire it via less than ethical means are regarded by some as veritable Bibles of political teaching.

But, as ever, fame is fleeting and as of January 2001, it will be time for Machiavelli to move aside as reigning king of political teaching and allow a successor to take his place. A successor who goes by the name of Demis Hassabis - founder of Elixir Studios and creator of Republic: The Revolution - a game that will teach you politics like you've never been taught them before.

Sure, comparing Hassabis to Machiavelli sounds a little hyperbolic,



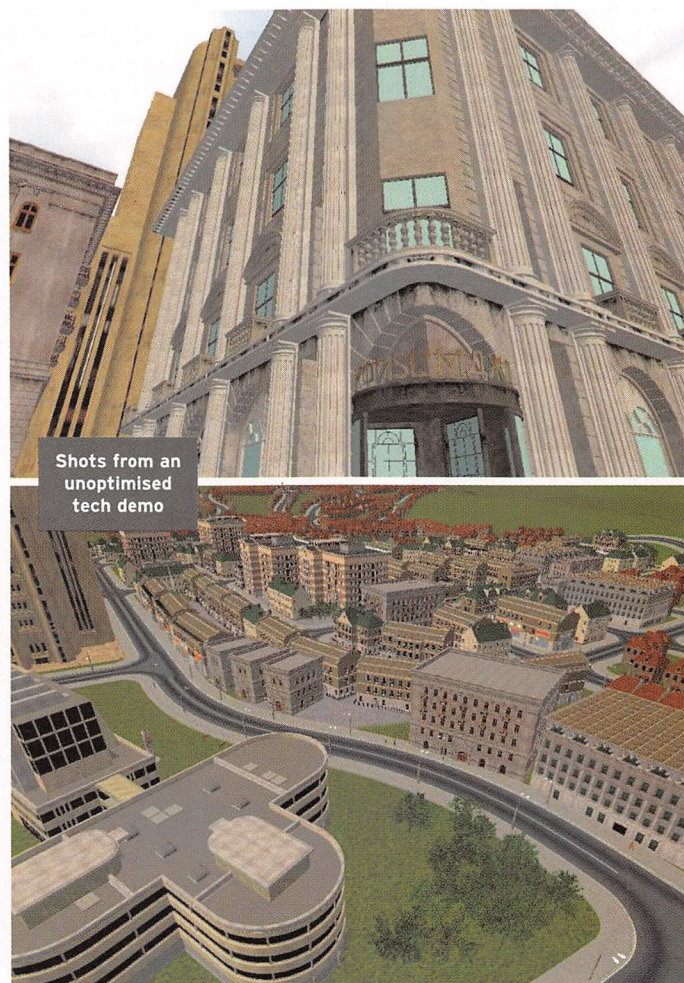
but just think: the best way to learn something is to experience it. And experience it you will. What Hassabis is offering us here isn't some run-of-the-mill computerised card game a la Politika. He's offering us a chance to control Novistrana, a mythical and politically turbulent Eastern European

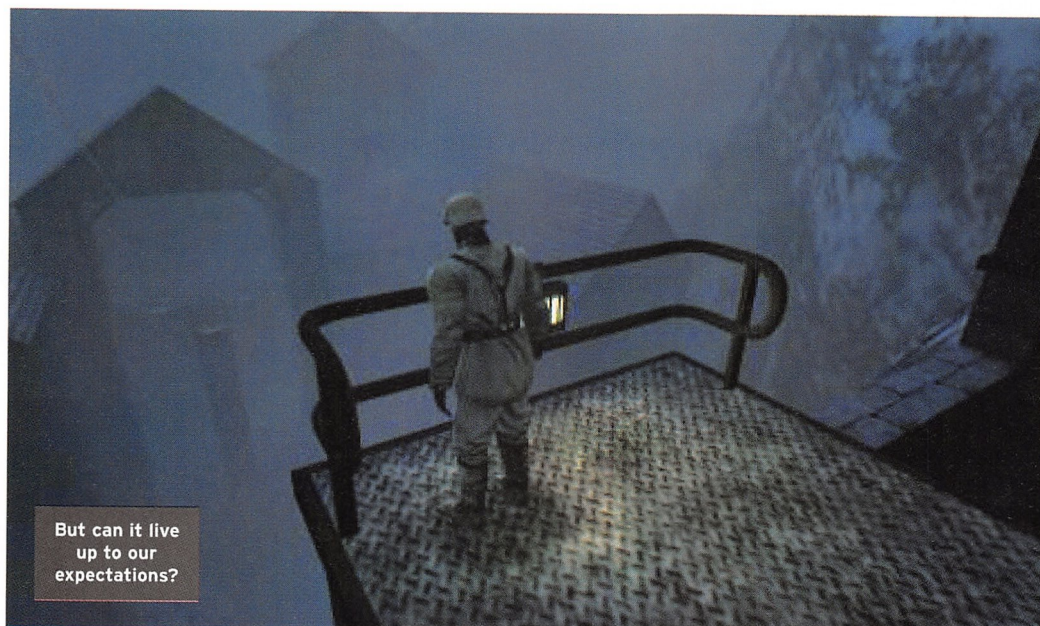
country that, by utilising one of the most advanced 3D engines yet seen, consists of *one million* entirely individual virtual inhabitants.

Such an amazing level of detail is impressive enough but, incredibly, it is further enhanced and complemented by the *other* technical accomplishments of the Elixir team. As a case in point, take the 2000 sq km of Novistrana itself - a country replete with cities and towns detailed to an extent bordering on the ridiculous. Ridiculous in the sense that, during development, Elixir's art team had furious debates over whether or not to model the pollen particles on individual flowers sitting in nondescript balcony boxes all over the country. Hmm, pedantic.

But what can we look forward to in Republic? We can look forward to a game that isn't really a game but rather an immensely detailed political simulation that allows the player to interact - via an intuitive interface - with a world detailed down to the rivets on every last screw and bolt that make it up.

We can look forward to an experience that a lot of games promise but rarely live up to: complete and utter immersion.



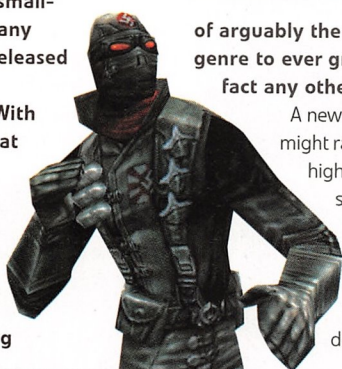


But can it live up to our expectations?

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

THE REBIRTH OF A GAMING LEGEND

Back in the late 80s PC gamers were faced with a very limited choice; the mighty 486 had only just been released and no one knew what a soundcard was. One day, a small-time Texas company named Apogee released the original Wolfenstein 3D. With it, we realised that the PC was capable of breathtaking action gaming. It was the dawn of PC popularity and the beginning



DETAILS

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Gray Matter
DUE 2nd Qtr

of arguably the most successful genre to ever grace the PC, or in fact any other system.

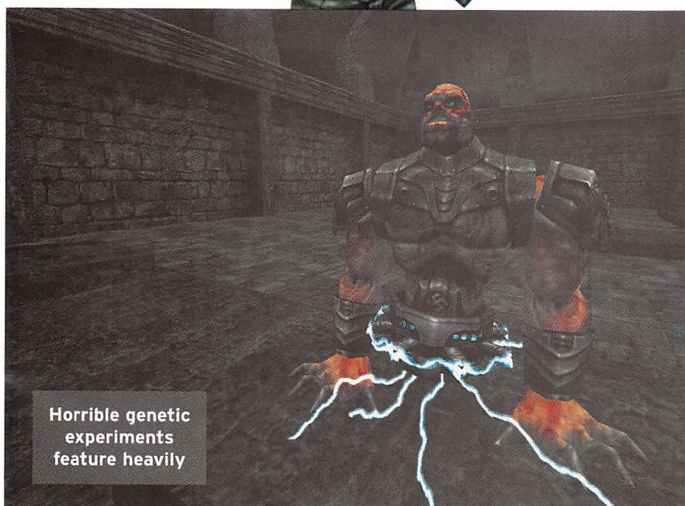
A new version of Wolf3D might rank particularly highly in the nostalgia stakes, but that would be pointless if the game was a shameless attempt to get a few more dollars from fans who

want to relive past glories. However, Return to Castle Wolfenstein looks like one of the hottest singleplayer action games currently in development. Imagine a narrative-based firstperson shooter as good as Half-Life, and using the Quake III Arena engine to depict the Nazi-infested castle. To many gamers, this surely represents some kind of holy grail.

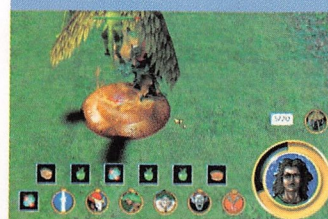
Not too much has been revealed yet, but even the description of the first level has us salivating in anticipation. The few screenshots available show some beautiful level design and artwork which appears more detailed than Quake III: Arena in almost every way; it looks so ambient and has this eerie feel about it, it's wonderful.

Grey Matter is making a particular effort to make the player feel like part of a larger war, not just a lone soldier in a one-man battle. This aspect is clearly evident in the first level that has a troop of soldiers storming a misty beach and fighting their way up to a beach head. The AI looks tremendous - not only will enemies fall back when it seems they're outnumbered, but they will also throw back grenades that are yet to explode.

There is so many things we could say about this game that just astound us. We're all sweating on its release, but we're surely not the only ones.



Horrible genetic experiments feature heavily



THE ART OF MAGIC

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Mythos Games
DUE 2nd Qtr

The sequel to Magic & Mayhem, this is a tactical combat game with elves, wizards and orcs aplenty. The Gollop Bros invented the genre with Laser Squad and X-Com, which augurs well for success.



THE REAL NEVERENDING STORY

GENRE Adventure
DEVELOPER Discreet Monsters
DUE TBA

Near-terminal slippage means this may well live up to its name. Borrowing more from the novel than the film, the key feature of this pretty adventure is whether its vaunted complex dialogue system maintains credibility.



THE WORLD IS NOT ENOUGH

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Eurocom
DUE 2nd Qtr

Surprisingly, come mid-year, TWINE will be the first Bond game to see release on PC. Let's just hope the extra six months of development result in a rather better effort than the recent console versions.



THRONE OF DARKNESS

GENRE Roleplaying
DEVELOPER Click Entertainment
DUE 1st Qtr

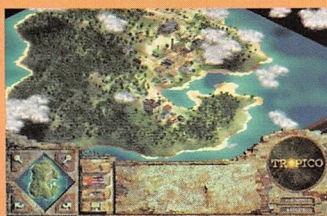
From various ex-Blizzard types, this is an RPG that obviously owes much to Diablo. The twist arrives in shape of a Japanese setting, with the player's party of samurai warriors able to grow to a complementary quartet.



TITANIUM ANGELS

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER SCI
DUE TBA

Initially scheduled for release on PC only, there have been recent suggestions that this thirdperson action/adventure might make the switch to PS2 or Xbox. Given its promise, this would be a real shame. We'll keep you posted.



TROPICO

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Poptop
DUE 2nd Qtr

Wading through the turbulent political sea surrounding a small, fictional nation in Central America is a genuinely novel idea for a game. It might not be everyone's recreational cigarette, but developer Poptop has pledged much ruthlessness, exploitation and backstabbing.



ULTIMA WORLDS ONLINE

GENRE Roleplaying
DEVELOPER Origin
DUE 4th Qtr

We're not in Britannia any more. The real sequel to Ultima Online - after several expansion packs - will embrace a powerful 3D engine to depict its two new worlds. With motion-captured combat and a host of professions, Origin is taking us a step closer to virtual reality.



CLIVE BARKER'S UNDYING

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Dreamworks
DUE February

Billed as Half-Life meets Resident Evil, the game bearing the famous horror author's name has set its stall as a firstperson descent into the macabre. The player is equipped with an arsenal combining guns and magic spells in order to defeat a host of tormented souls.

SIMSVILLE

HALFWAY BETWEEN SIMSCITY AND THE SIMS

Some may say it stems from childhood, others say it's due to the fact that I am a dominant female (*This must be Agata - Ed*), but I love playing The Sims. This started with an affair that began many years ago, playing SimCity with a cheat code that gave me thirty million in play money. But The Sims really did it for me. It's sort of like finally admitting to the world you like playing with Barbies but in a more socially acceptable way.

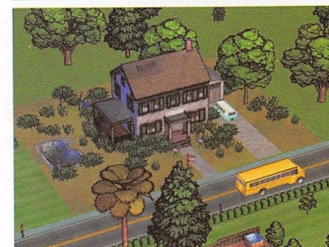
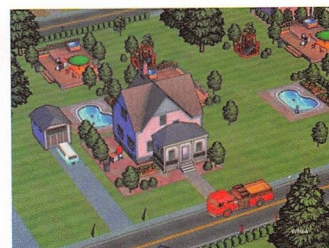
But, as with all great games, you start wanting more. Once you've maxed your character's points out, tried every profession, own the mansion on the hill and imported some new stunning wallpaper and floor tiles,

DETAILS

GENRE Sim
DEVELOPER Maxis
DUE May

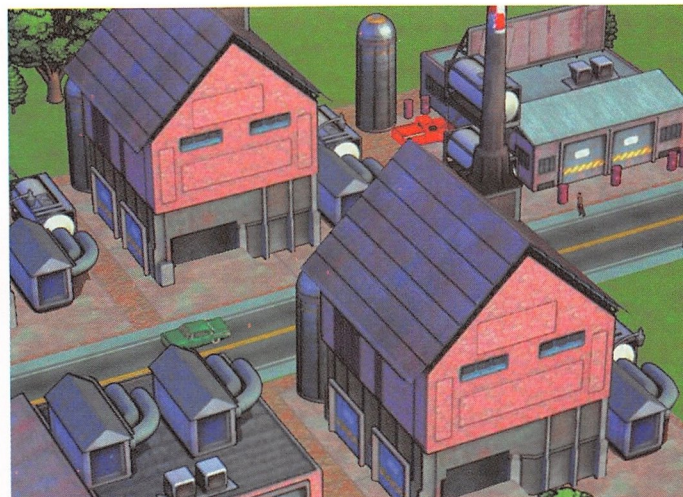
you may start to ask yourself, "Is there another world out there?"

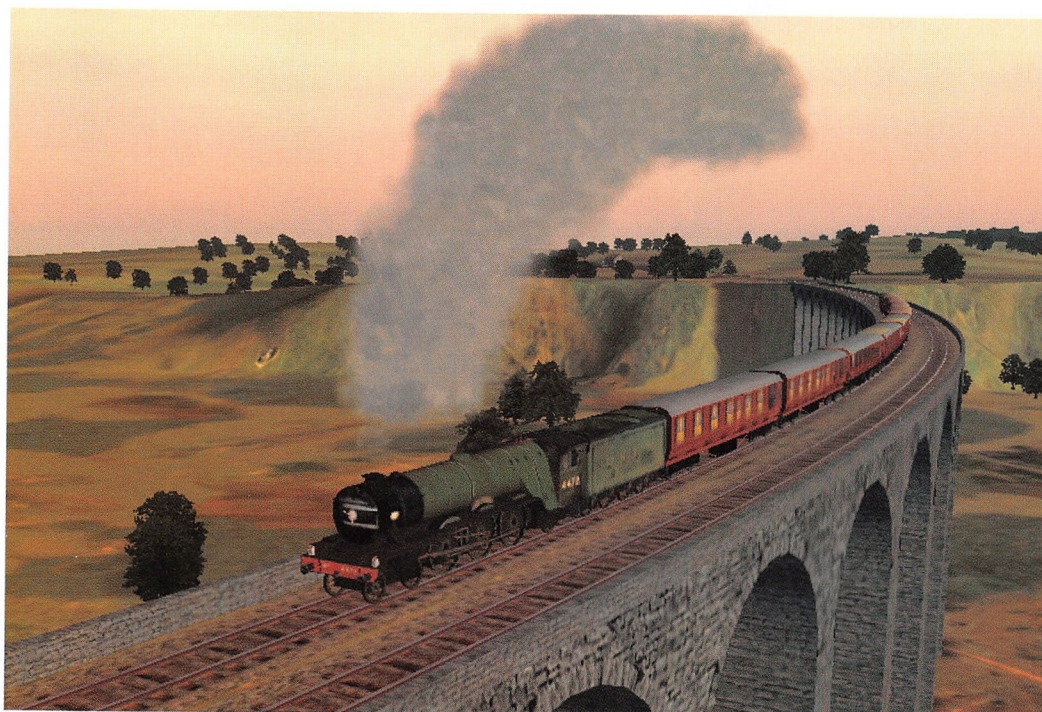
It seems like Maxis is answering our prayers - scheduled for a mid-year release, Simsville looks to be the game that at least I have been searching for, ever since I lost Dream House on the C64. Simsville is set to combine some of the best features of SimCity and The Sims - a little community for you to control, houses, people and all. With emphasis again on harmony, this time it's a little village that you'll need to keep happy.



Some of the changes that have tipped this game to be a winner include the ability to import characters from The Sims. This will be great for all of us with a couple of hundred thousand hours worth of character we've built. You'll need to set up your community from scratch, populate it with likeminded individuals, and keep them all happy with well thought out amenities, schools, stores, infrastructure, job market and gathering spots. At any time, you'll be able to click on a person and see their stats - complete with associated characters.

After the extraordinary success of The Sims, Simsville is set to be huge. It won't be long until many a gamer will be lost in their new virtual world.





TRAIN SIMULATOR

WELL, IT'S NOTHING IF NOT ORIGINAL

"Microsoft Train Simulator brings the power and excitement of some of the world's most famous trains to your PC, placing you in the role of engineer or passenger with unprecedented realism, exciting real-world rail challenges, and the tools to recreate almost any railroad experience in the world."

It almost says it all. So to summarise the official press blurb above in one word: *intriguing*.

What we do know. The railway adventure takes place on over 600 virtual miles of rail, supposedly carefully recreated with accurate elevation and terrain data. As well as dynamic weather conditions (take care not to lose traction in wet or icy conditions) Train Sim's developer, Kuju Entertainment, has reputedly worked hard to authentically recreate the nuances of each of the six train systems and routes. Lines featured include Japan's mountainous Hisatsu, the US Northeast Corridor, as well as the The Flying Scotsman run through the English countryside, among others.

Not much has been revealed about the "real-world" rail challenges though. We're hoping that one scenario might prove to be the ol' Bad Guy Making His Way From The Rear Carriage To The Front Carriage Of The Train So That He Can Take Control Of The Speeding Machine.

DETAILS

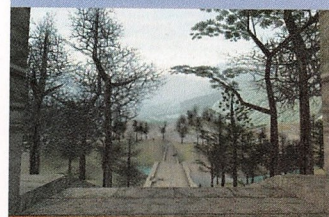
GENRE Simulation
DEVELOPER Kuju
DUE 1st Qtr

Here you could play the ever-diligent train conductor pulling some Jackie-Chan moves on the unwelcome passenger. Or our favourite: Getting 'The Daily Mail Delivered On Time, Every Time. Just think of the possibilities. No, the challenges featured are likely to be much less fantastic. Train Sim is squarely aimed at the more mature gamer, the type that would appreciate a long-haul freight run through hilly terrain.

And even if Train Sim does end up being the subtle affair it appears to be (that is, quite unlike the

Japanese arcade interpretation), it is guaranteed to do one thing. It will open the eyes of many to a form of transport that is much more than pulling a few levers and sitting back - one steeped in rich history. And one that represents a very different take on motion as featured in the many flight and car driving/racing sims out there.

No less than intriguing.



UNREAL 2

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Epic/Legend
DUE 4th Qtr

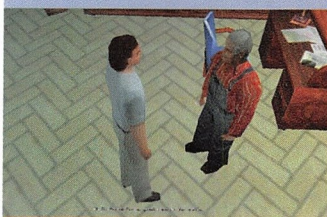
Co-developed by Wheel of Time creator Legend in conjunction with Epic, Unreal 2 is a fully-fledged singleplayer title, and so should be viewed as the proper sequel rather than Unreal Tournament. Little has been sighted save for a couple of impressive tech demos.



WARCRAFT 3

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Blizzard
DUE 4th Qtr

In all likelihood, Blizzard will spend most of the year trying to shoehorn roleplaying elements into a standard realtime strategy environment for the sake of the next Orcs vs Humans battle. Oh, and the 3D engine is a bit spiffy as well.



WATCHMAKER

GENRE Adventure
DEVELOPER Treccion
DUE 3rd Qtr

Italy-based Treccion is one of the few developers still dedicated to the traditional adventure game. After 1998's Nightlong, Watchmaker is its next attempt to revive the ailing genre. With a firstperson view and detailed 3D world, it could be a surprise hit.



WIZARDRY 8

GENRE Roleplaying
DEVELOPER Sir-Tech
DUE 2nd Qtr

In which Wizardry draws nearer to overtaking Ultima as the longest-running games series ever. The eighth iteration won't depart from the tried-and-true roleplaying formula, though it will be the first to feature a proper 3D engine.



WORLD WAR II ONLINE

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Cornered Rat
DUE 1st Qtr

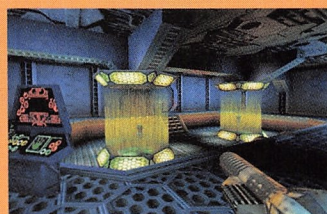
Stupidly ambitious or just plain stupid? That's the biggest question regarding Cornered Rat's massively multiplayer war simulation. Players begin as ground troops, before moving up the ranks into leadership positions where strategic nous is more crucial than the ability to aim a tank turret.



WORMS WORLD PARTY

GENRE Annelid Action
DEVELOPER Team 17
DUE January

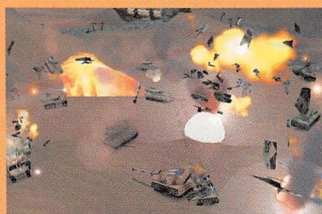
The world's best party game ever returns. Essentially, expect little alteration to the fundamental blow-up-your-friends gameplay, besides an online component with global tournaments and rankings.



X-COM ALLIANCE

GENRE Action
DEVELOPER Microprose
DUE 3rd Qtr

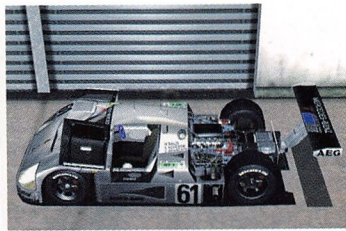
Rumours of its death have been greatly exaggerated. X-Com Alliance is still in development, albeit the victim of some major gameplay renovation. To what end, it's not entirely clear at this stage, as Microprose has been less than open about the reasons behind the delays. One to watch.



Z2

GENRE Strategy
DEVELOPER Bitmap Bros
DUE 2nd Qtr

Follow-up to the mildly successful RTS from England's once fashionable Bitmap Bros. Like the recent Sacrifice, the Z games stress the importance of territory in achieving victory on the battlefield. Graphically, this already looks behind the times.



WORLD SPORTS CARS

THE SPIRITUAL SUCCESSOR TO GRAND PRIX LEGENDS

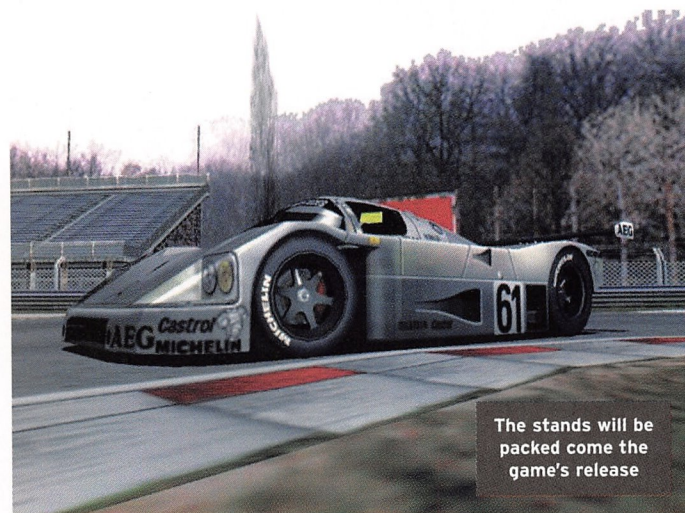
For the past two years, Papyrus' Grand Prix Legends has enjoyed an uncontested reputation as the most realistic racing simulation in existence. UK-based developer, West Racing, is determined to wrest the racing sim crown from Grand Prix Legends with its almost excessively realistic title, World Sports Cars. Offering an irresistible selection of some of the fastest automobiles on the planet, the

be simulated will border on the insane. For example, each tyre will have over one hundred variables that dictate its performance under load, pressure and temperature, and every part of each car will have a wear value. This will make it possible, when a car is pushed too hard, for specific parts to fail, leading to problems like engine blowouts, brake failures and cracked suspension coils.

DETAILS

GENRE Racing
DEVELOPER West Racing
DUE 2nd Qtr

extreme emphasis on realism, one would expect the game to include an equally realistic damage system, and this will certainly be the case in World Sports Cars. Each body panel will be susceptible to damage, and will eventually fall off when subjected to stress and constant abuse. This panel-based system will also make it possible for the player to test drive each vehicle's chassis around tracks, minus any body panels! Although such an option will have few practical applications, it will undoubtedly make for a memorable experience.



The stands will be packed come the game's release



game will accurately recreate the finest vehicles from the garages of automotive greats like Porsche, Lotus and Mercedes. These vehicles will be exactly modelled from the ground up to accurately portray their physical dimensions, performance specifications and handling characteristics, and the degree to which various forces acting on the cars will

In addition, external factors will affect each car's performance. Over the course of a race, dirt, oil, carbon dust and dead insects will build up on the exterior, affecting the vehicle's aerodynamic profile and obscuring the player's view. With such an

Though the game isn't yet completed, World Sports Cars will assuredly set the standard in graphical excellence, and its sound quality will be second to none. For driving sim fanatics, particularly those enamoured with Grand Prix Legends, World Sports Cars will be an essential purchase.



PC GAMEGUIDE There's developers all across the

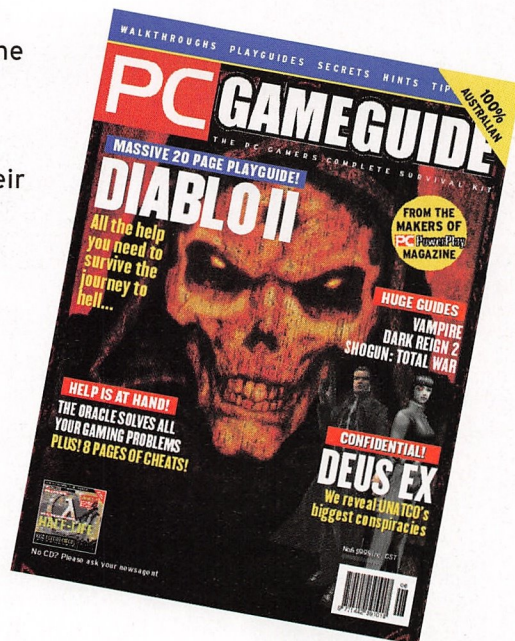
world working hard every day and night for years to get their



games made right. They put a hell of a lot of work in to them,

and they make 'em tough. That's where PC GameGuide comes

in. We've got everything you'll ever need, and more.



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we do so much more than the usual "go here, turn left, kill baddie". Once you've read one of our

playguides you'll know everything there is to know about that game.



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walkthroughs that we pride ourselves on. General tips, gaming help, and strategies for a huge variety of

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where all the weird

stuff happens.

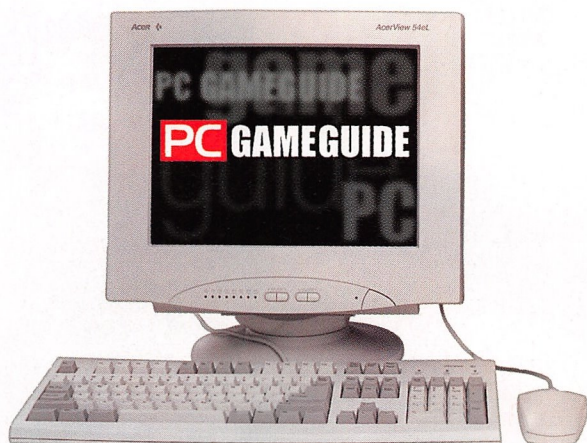
PLAYGUIDES!

In short, there's

enough material in every issue to allow you to live your

gaming lifestyle to the fullest. Live your life the way you

want, with **PC GAMEGUIDE** at your side.







Quake 3

Team Arena

DETAILS

GENRE

Action

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (LAN, TCP/IP)

DEVELOPER

id Software

PUBLISHER

Activision

DUE

January

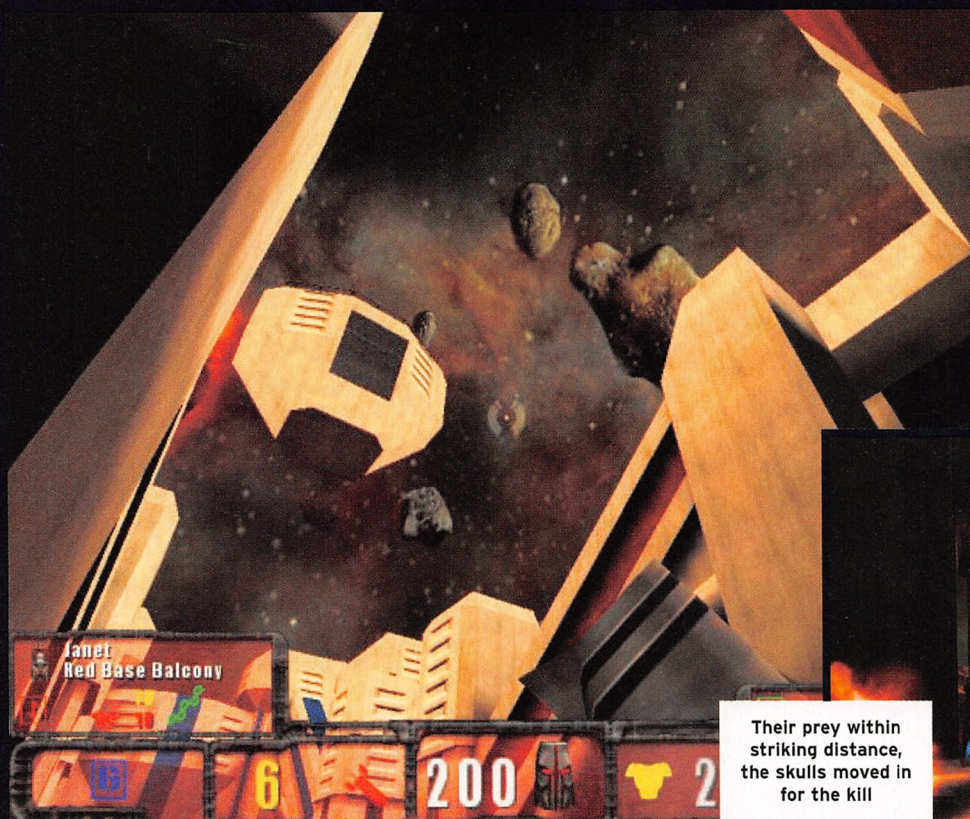
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www.idsoftware.com

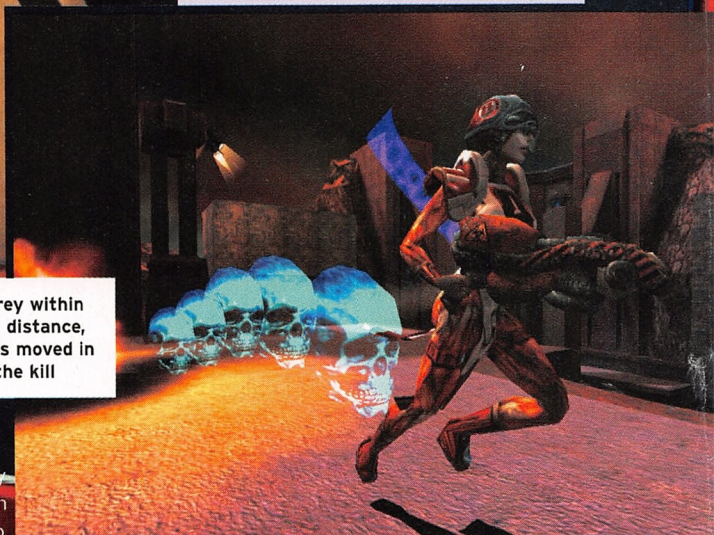
THIS TIME LAST YEAR WE REVIEWED QUAKE 3 ARENA. NOW, FINALLY, ID SOFTWARE HAS ADDED SOME WORTHY TEAMPLAY MODES. OR ARE THEY? ANTHONY FORDHAM INVESTIGATES...

FRAMERATE ISSUES

Rip into the demo and while you may be impressed with the smooth visuals and the big explosions, if you've been playing Q3A, you may notice that your framerate in Q3TA is noticeably lower than in the earlier title. Nothing drastic, of course, but it was intriguing why a game that should be technically identical to Q3A would run slower. Fortunately id's Robert A Duffy explains: "Team Arena is using more visual effects than Q3A from a map, texture and shader perspective. We are looking at things to make sure that the hit on frame-rate is not too drastic." Hmn... perhaps that's not much of an explanation after all.



Their prey within striking distance, the skulls moved in for the kill



The Quake 3 Arena vs Unreal Tournament argument begins and ends with teamplay options. Few can successfully argue that Unreal has the superior engine, better player models, more accessible weapons or a faster pace. On each of these issues, Quake 3 triumphs. But out of the box, UT has many more game modes than its id rival.

Quake 3 Team Arena is id's attempt to change all that. The first add-on developed by the company since the heady days of Doom, Q3TA aims to provide a rich and varied teamplay experience for Q3A fans and newbies alike.

A sense of identity

For this preview, we looked at the Quake 3 Team Arena demo. The demo is a 127Mb download, and rather disappointingly you only get one level, two player models and four game types. So it's a good thing Harry already downloaded it for you and whacked it on the coverdisc.

A brief tour then.

Most game functionality is the same as Q3A, with similar options to set up your character, choose models, configure keys and select effect colours. Player identity, as always, is very good and Q3TA will maintain Q3A's expandability, so you can plug in new player models and still be the only six-shootin' skeleton-in-drag on the block.

With your player configured, it's time to select a map and a game mode. Singleplayer remains from Q3A, pitching you against bots in all of the game modes. In the demo, you can only play in teams of three, and we hope in the final release you will be able to increase the size of your team, because at the moment the single map feels rather empty.

Skull collections

The demo includes four game modes. Capture the Flag is the bog-standard teamplay option seen in what feels like a thousand games; capture the enemy's flag and return it to your base. One Flag CTF places a single white flag in the middle of the map and you must capture and return it to your enemy's base. Innovative.

Still, then there's Overload, in which your flag is replaced by a glowing skull totem. The skull totem has 2500 hit points, and it's your aim to destroy it. Simple enough, except it regenerates 15 points every second. This game mode is quite different, in that defence becomes fun and challenging, and not just a matter of sitting around the base while everyone else has fun fragging each other in the corridors.

The final game type is Harvester. When you frag an opponent, a glowing skull appears at the central point of the map. You must collect these skulls and run them into your enemy's skull portal thing. Then you get points. This game mode has a great look, because as you collect skulls they attach themselves to you and follow you around the map, so you can end up with a tail of six or seven enemy skulls mirroring your every move.

So, those are the game modes. Like Threewave CTF and various other mods, Q3TA also includes a number of runes or powerups in the game. Guard boosts your health to 200 and regenerates damage. Doubler is a quad-lite powerup - it doubles weapon damage. Ammo Regen is a little bit cryptic, but I think basically it regenerates your ammo. When you pick up these runes, their effect is permanent until you are fragged.

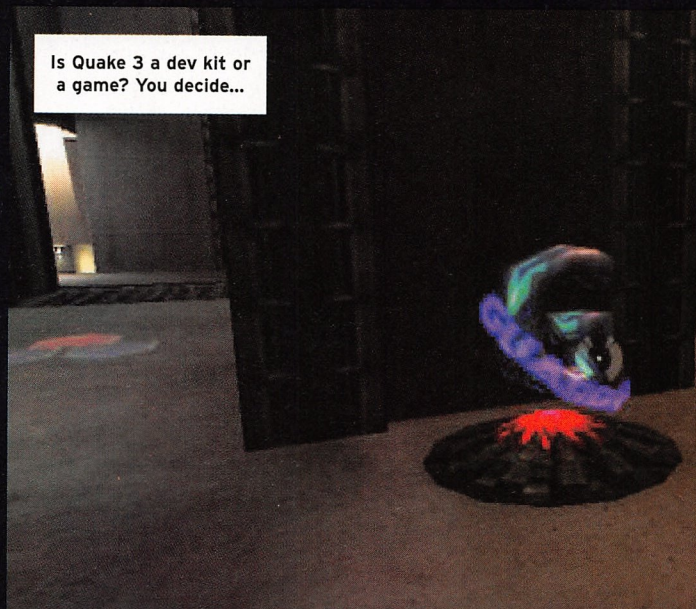
There is also a one-time powerup called Kamikaze. This thing creates an enormous black vortex of burning death, which instantly kills everyone within a fairly generous radius. You lose a frag for using it, but it does feel very good to be the deliverer of so much destruction.

Mod exploitation

This then is the Q3TA demo in a nutshell. While the game is slick and runs very well - the legacy of the exemplary Quake 3 engine - overall there are some concerns which should be noted.



Is Quake 3 a dev kit or a game? You decide...



At least id has discovered a new shade of brown



With a limit of three players per team, the demo maps do tend to feel somewhat empty



\$50 SPK

And yet, id is still pushing Q3TA as a development toolkit. Robert A. Duffy, a programmer with id, recently ranted: "Quake III

Quake 3 Team Arena is all but destined to sell by the bucketload, and it does look like a good game. But will it be as good as it should be, given the years of loyal support and mountains of cash we - you, me, the gaming world - have heaped at id's feet? Our upcoming exhaustive review will help you decide for sure.

In the meantime, play the demo and ask yourself if id has created the ultimate teamplayer game, or whether they have just ripped off the fans and mod developers who have supported them for so long. ■



First though, let me mention that PC Powerplay does not normally offer criticism within a preview. However, since this is a hands-on preview which you can experience through the demo on the coverdisc, we feel some criticism is appropriate.

Foremost, it appears that Q3TA brings nothing really innovative or new to the multiplayer arena. The ideas that are in the game have all been lifted directly from mods that have existed - for free - since the original Quake. CTF in particular is almost becoming a cliché.

It seems in Q3TA that id has perhaps taken advantage of the mod community that its games have created. For many years now, id has been criticised for making engines rather than games. And it's a philosophy id representatives such as John Carmack have embraced.

Time and time again they have met criticism of an unexciting singleplayer experience with the argument that what they are providing is almost a games toolkit, on which other developers can build much better and more innovative games. But now, it's basically as if id has just stolen all of the ideas from the fans and packaged them into another box retailing at eighty dollars.

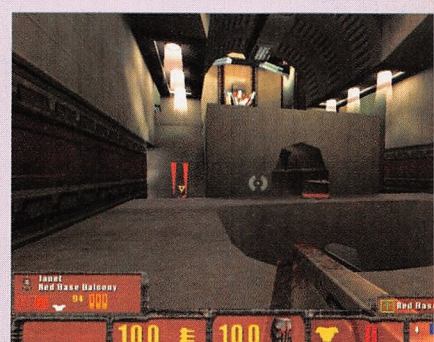
Arena has always offered the most capable, technically sound, and best looking game platform around, and now that we have added a whole host of new functionality - much of it at mod team requests - mod teams will have in their hands the most complete game production toolkit ever and some really cool toys to play with. They are going to have the ability to produce a complete ass kicking, commercial company spooking, single/multiplayer player game experience. I am looking forward to seeing what people do with the all the new stuff."

All well and good for the mod developers, but should the playing public have to shell out eighty bucks for a product id all but admits is not really up to scratch in the gameplay stakes?

It is almost as if id is unable to make a definite decision about what kind of a developer it is. Does id create complete, rounded games with rich single and multiplayer content? Or does it only produce Software Development Kits, providing the infrastructure for other developers to build on and expand? Until id makes this decision, this writer at least will continue to criticise the company, with particular attention to areas of gameplay and innovation.

DONT' FENCE ME IN

Another potentially interesting new development in Q3TA was hinted at in the demo movie and then confirmed by Robert A. Duffy in yet another .plan update. The new engine can handle much larger distances and thus larger maps than previous id titles. Mr Duffy claims the original limitation for distance in Q3A was +/- 4096 while in Q3TA this blows out to a massive +/- 131072. So you will indeed be able to roam through the wide open country that you love. And according to the Duffmeister, the very largest Q3A level is but a postage-stamp compared to the huge Gothic massiveness of the new game. So pack your hiking boots.



Tribes 2

DETAILS**GENRE**

Multiplayer FPS

MULTIPLAYER

Duh!

DEVELOPER

Dynamix

PUBLISHER

Sierra Studios

DUE

February

URLwww.tribes2.com

DYNAMIX ATTEMPTS TO IMPROVE ON MULTIPLAYER PERFECTION.
BRETT ROBINSON GAUGES THE SUCCESS...







In recent months, the popularity of the original *Starseige: Tribes* has been eclipsed by titles with greater mass market appeal. *Half-Life* mods like *Counter-Strike* and *Team Fortress Classic*, and the likes of *Quake 3: Arena* and *Unreal Tournament* have all contributed to this downturn. However, few would disagree with the assertion that this reduction in the player base of Dynamix's masterpiece is but a transitory adjustment. With the recent launch of the closed Beta test and a flurry of high profile press coverage, interest in the sequel is intensifying at an exponential rate.

Because Dynamix succeeded in creating a virtually flawless title the first time around, *Tribes 2* won't deviate significantly from the existing formula. Although we are rabid proponents of innovation, *Tribes 2* will be one title where a lack of serious change will be most welcome. One of the few valid criticisms of *Tribes* was the steepness of its learning curve: inadequate documentation and an unabashedly elitist player community served as significant barriers to enjoyment of the complex title. Understandably,

Dynamix hopes to address this shortcoming, which should maximise *Tribes 2*'s market potential. Thus, for newcomers to the *Tribes* experience, *Tribes 2* will include a comprehensive singleplayer training where the intricacies of the game will be revealed in a relatively safe environment. In this campaign, the only opposition encountered will be AI-controlled bots who will be as lethal or as innocuous as the player desires.

More toys to play with

Classic multiplayer modes like Capture the Flag, Capture and Hold and Deathmatch serve as primary attractions, and two new modes - Seige and Bounty - will be introduced. Seige will see one tribe defending an objective, while the opposing tribe will be required to destroy it. At the end of each round, the competing tribes will switch roles, and the hostilities will continue in earnest. In an interesting twist on the standard deathmatch, Bounty will assign each player a specific target. The player will then have to hunt down and attack that target, and will have to eliminate them before moving on to another target. In order to dissuade players from attacking anyone but their allotted target, a penalty system will be implemented.

Tribes' expansive outdoor environments and cavernous interiors will make a welcome return in the sequel, as will the ability to travel between the two. As well as being more detailed, *Tribes 2*'s environments will be subject to real time weather systems, which will bring snow, rain and even lighting to the proceedings. The addition of volumetric fog and bodies of water will increase *Tribes 2*'s tactical scope immeasurably. "You will be able to shroud yourself in the fog or conceal yourself underwater to elude others, especially when you have the flag" explains Producer, Dave 'QIX' Georgeson. "I think gamers will also have a lot of fun devising ways to force heavily armoured defenders into water (where their weight will make rapid movement very difficult) or into lava beds" he adds with a cheeky grin.

A doubling in the number of available vehicles is also certain to alter the way players attempt to fulfil their objectives. The standard Scout and Heavy Personnel Carrier will be revamped somewhat, and the Medium Personnel Carrier will be replaced with a Bomber operated by up to three players. "I'm most excited about those vehicles that will require teamwork,



SWIFT SERVICE

Tribes veterans infuriated by lengthy queues at Inventory Stations will be heartened by the introduction of the new Inventory Pads. These will function in much the same way as Inventory Stations, in that they will outfit players with their chosen combat armour and weapons, but with one important difference. Instead of allowing players to select their armour and weapons upon activation of the station itself, players in Tribes 2 will be required to select their loadouts prior to stepping onto the pads. The outfitting process itself only takes a second so it will be possible for an entire team to prepare for battle in less than a minute!

particularly the bomber" says Georgeson. "The precise coordination required between the pilot, the bombardier and the tail gunner will make the Tribes 2 experience all the richer."

A high-speed Grav Cycle will also be added. Popular with snipers and flag capturers, this lightly armoured vehicle will traverse the terrain at an astonishing rate, thanks to its ability to float above it. In addition to this impressive selection of airborne and semi-airborne vehicles, a ground-based Assault Vehicle and a Mobile Point Base will make their debuts. Though unarmed, the Mobile Point Base will be heavily shielded, while the Assault Vehicle will be fitted with either a mortar launcher or a plasma cannon, depending on the driver's preference.

Although many of Tribes 2's weapons will carry over from the original, these will be tweaked slightly to eliminate some of their quirks. In addition, a slew of new weapons will be added to the available arsenal. Georgeson provides the following insight: "For starters, all of the weapons from Tribes will be re-textured and given all new effects. We will be adding several new weapons as well. The Missile Launcher fire heat-seeking projectiles that will lock onto anything with a heat

signature - including the enemy's jetpack. It also helps gamers bring down enemy vehicles, which is something that was very difficult to do in Tribes. The Shock Lance will be a close-range weapon. Used in conjunction with the new Cloaking Pack, the Shock Lance will enable players to sneak up on an enemy from behind, and inject a massive electrical current through their conveniently conductive armour suit." A number of new grenades, including Flash, Flare and Concussion will round out the game's complement of weaponry.

Outstanding network performance

A standout feature of the original, packs will also be making a return. New packs will range from the classic Shield Pack to the aforementioned Cloaking Pack. Of special interest to demolitions experts and suicide bombers will be the Satchel Pack. This pack, filled to the brim with powerful and volatile explosives, will allow the player to obliterate strategically valuable targets, or simply blow away scores of enemies unlucky enough to be enveloped by its lethal conflagration. The pack will be activated as soon as it is dropped, and it will be possible to detonate it from afar, or not-so-far, depending on the mentality of the player in possession of the remote.

Tribes 2's network performance will be of great concern to gamers without the luxury of a broadband connection, but Dynamix will be endeavouring to ensure the game exceeds expectations in this area, too. "We're designing Tribes 2's network architecture from the ground up to be the best in the business" Georgeson offers. "As a result, gamers with 56K modems will be able to compete against their broadband counterparts without any disadvantage.

The new weapons and armour leave the original's for dead

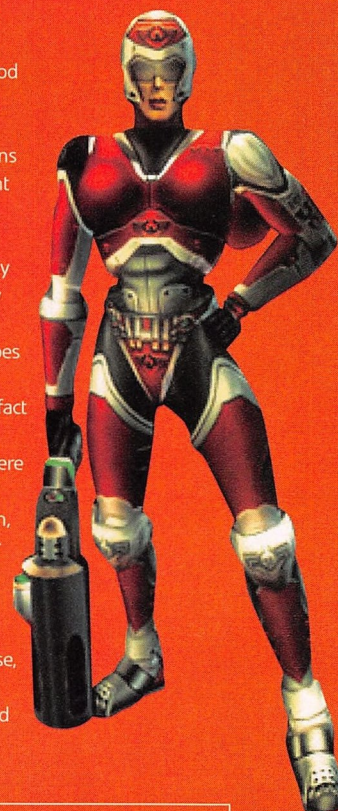
Mission Type: Capture the Flag
Game Time Remaining: 03:15.4
Storm: *At Base* 0
Inferno: *At Base* 0
Your Team Rank: *Unclaimed*

Missile launchers in action. Sweet

And with built-in support for voice communication, interaction between team members will also be maximised" he says.

Dynamix has deservedly garnered a reputation as a developer with an unshakeable commitment to its customer base. The company's support of the Tribes mod community is particularly well-documented, and it is this unusually altruistic attitude that has seen the developer become one of the industry's best loved. As with the original Tribes, Tribes 2's source code will remain inviolate, but the game's scripting system will be one of the most powerful tools available to players and mod makers. Encouragingly, Dynamix will be working with the premier mod teams in order to assist them in bringing their visions to life. For a few notable mod development teams, this process of consultation and collaboration has already begun, leading many to speculate that a number of quality mods will see the light of day immediately Tribes 2's release.

After several years in development, Tribes 2 only a month away from hitting retail shelves. More importantly, however, is the fact that the game will retain that indefinable magic that made its predecessor the premiere teamplay firstperson shooter. With its increased support for end user modification, and vastly improved visuals, an even larger community will undoubtedly emerge in support of the game. The decision to lengthen the Beta test period in order to further tweak gameplay will delay its release, but we're heartened by Dynamix's commitment to the gaming community and eagerly await Tribes 2's completion.



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PC PowerPlay

IN REVIEW

The most authoritative reviews around

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Call me a Scrooge, but I, for one, am bloody glad that January is finally here. The nightmare of shopping centre muzak and visits from vexatious relatives is well and truly over, and many of us are now proudly nursing post-New Year's celebration hangovers. There's never been a more opportune moment to kick back, relax and down a Berocca or two.

For those of you who foolishly squandered your hard-earned money on Sony's horrendously overpriced PlayStation 2, brace yourselves for the inevitable post-Christmas price drop. PlayStation 2's aren't the only things that are going to be heavily discounted this month, though. All those games that Santa forgot to leave under your tree will soon be ripe for the picking.

So, if you managed to get all your gift shopping done at the Reject Shop (stingy bastard!), or you have exceedingly affluent and generous relatives, now is the time to put all that surplus legal tender to good use. For everyone else, it's time for a trip down to the local pawn shop with all those unwanted pairs of socks, Battlefield Earth DVDs and John Howard autobiographies in tow. Who says men can't have fun shopping?

Oh, and we got a bunch of games - some good, some terrible - in for review this month...

brettr@next.com.au

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THE PCPP REVIEW SCORING SYSTEM

- 90+** Gold Award. A classic, everyone will love this game.
- 89-80** A strong title that's hard to fault. But perhaps not the best in its field.
- 79-60** Competent and playable. For fans of the genre.
- 59-40** Decidedly average, probably boring.
- 39-0** A dog. Bad, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible. Avoid.

Need The minimum requirements to get the game running at a playable speed.

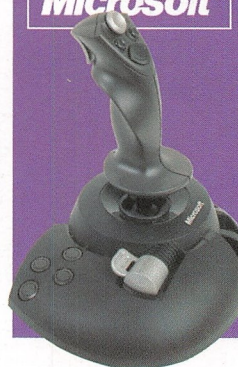
Want The ideal system requirements for the game.

For The major reasons why you'll like the reviewed game.

Against The major reasons why you won't.

GAME OF THE MONTH COMPETITION!

Microsoft



Microsoft wants you to play Mechwarrior 4 the way it was meant to be played. As such, we have been supplied with one knobby Sidewinder Precision Pro joystick to give away. Just answer this question for your chance to win!

NAME ALL PREVIOUS MECHWARRIOR TITLES RELEASED ON PC

Write your answer on the back of an envelope, addressed to: **Microsoft Game of the Month, PC PowerPlay**, 78 Renwick Street, Redfern NSW 2016

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MECHWARRIOR 4 VENGEANCE

This review doesn't start: "There's something sexy about 50ft tall..."

DETAILS

GENRE

Mech Combat

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Microsoft

PUBLISHER

Microsoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Microsoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

M

NEED

PII-300, 64Mb RAM,
800Mb HDD, 8Mb
3D Videocard

WANT

PIII-450, 128Mb
RAM, 1.4Gb HDD,
16Mb 3D Videocard

ONLINE

www.cyberramp.net/~robertp/mech/index.htm
A duo of freaks who build BattleMechs out of Lego!



www.badkarma.net
The immensely popular online mag devoted to all things BattleTech



www.robotwars.com
No BattleMechs here, but give it around a thousand years or so...



One of the coolest looking mechs in the game. It also bears a striking resemblance to the Sligs from Oddworld...



The Vulture returns...



As does the Madcat...



Well, maybe just the Madcat!

The 1989 release of the original **MechWarrior** marked the establishment of an electronic gaming institution that has survived, somewhat tenuously, for over a decade. **MechWarrior** was, admittedly, a niche title that remained shrouded in obscurity, but Activision's superlative **MechWarrior 2** brought the gaming community's interest in mech combat sims to a crescendo.

One year and several successful expansion packs later, FASA Corporation saw fit to revoke Activision's rights to the BattleTech license. Not yet ready to leap off the mech sim bandwagon, Activision developed its own franchise based on the lesser-known Heavy Gear universe. In 1999,

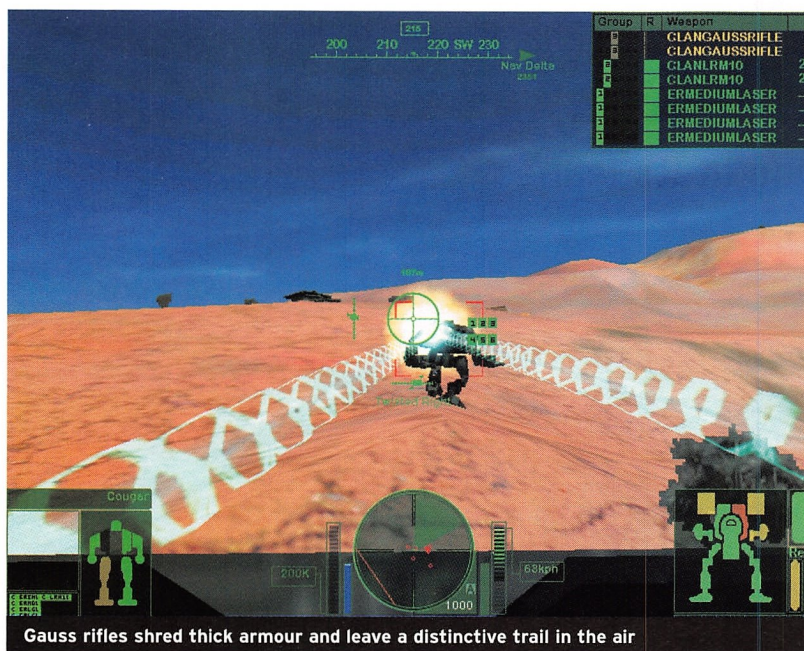
MechWarrior 3 arrived to much fanfare, but the game proved little more than a graphical update that was, in most respects, inferior to its predecessor. Interest in mech games dwindled, especially amongst the hardcore crowd, and the future of the genre seemed bleak.

Microsoft, ever vigilant when it came to identifying properties with earning potential, subsequently wrested the BattleTech license from the grasp of Zipper Interactive in an aggressive move that saw the software giant acquire FASA Interactive, the electronic gaming arm of FASA Corporation. Thus armed with the electronic rights to the BattleTech property, Microsoft's development team set to work on **MechWarrior 4**. The team itself comprised

FASA founder, Jordan Weisman, and a host of personnel who were once responsible for the creation of the BattleTech arcade pods.

From the outset, **MechWarrior 4** radiates quality. Its visuals, whilst not the quantum leap that **MechWarrior 3**'s were over **MechWarrior 2**'s, are nevertheless impressive. The mechs, many of which sport striking paint jobs, look absolutely incredible, as do their surroundings. The sterility of **MechWarrior 3**'s environments stands in sharp contrast to **MechWarrior 4**'s grandiose vistas. Snow-capped alpine slopes, undulating desert dune seas and primordial swamps serve as beautiful, but treacherous, backdrops for the ensuing hostilities. The fact that forested areas are literally crammed with trees adds immeasurably to the





Gauss rifles shred thick armour and leave a distinctive trail in the air



Lasers add to the heat of the desert



Slig, dead ahead!

HOT MECH-ON-MECH ACTION

MechWarrior 4 offers a pleasing array of multiplayer modes that include the deathmatch-like Destruction and the self-explanatory Capture the Flag. Attrition mode rewards players for damage inflicted as well as for kills. Steal the Beacon is a keep-away variation on CTF, and King of the Hill tasks combatants with occupation of a specific area of the map. Overall, they are far more compelling than MechWarrior 3's sorry offerings, and the supremely intelligent AI bots can be conscripted if team numbers need rounding out.



At 50 tons, this guy isn't huge, but is deceptively powerful

player's sense of immersion. Visually scanning a distant, wooded mountainside and catching a fleeting glimpse of a patrolling pair of mechs, the player can't help but be filled with a growing sense of trepidation. In situations such as this, especially when ammunition levels are dangerously low and mech damage is at a premium, the player invariably ponders the ancient axiom that promotes discretion as the better part of valour. Indeed, this is sometimes an appropriate sentiment, as the option to switch from active to passive sensors reduces the likelihood of detection and immediate annihilation.

Despite the fluidity with which mechs move in cut scenes, their movements in-game have traditionally been rigid and awkward. MechWarrior 4's developers combated this by outfitting most mechs with ball-jointed hips, giving each one a convincing lateral sway with each step. The movement animations of the game's mechs have also been revised. Each has been imbued with a movement pattern more appropriate to its form and function. Thus, lightweight scout mechs scramble over

the terrain with a degree of agility that belies their forty ton mass, and their seventy ton, assault mech brethren move with a predatory grace akin to that of panthers and wolves. Conversely, the lumbering gait of the ninety ton heavy mechs, bristling with weapons, leaves no doubt in the player's mind that, barring divine intervention or some supremely skilful piloting, death is imminent.

MechWarrior veterans, accustomed to the incompetent buffoonery of the CPU-controlled adversaries, will be pleasantly (or, perhaps, unpleasantly) surprised by the proficiency and sheer cunning of MechWarrior 4's AI opponents. Enemies are constantly mindful of the heat generated by their weapons, so it is very rare for the player to encounter AI pilots whose mechs have automatically shut down due to overheating. The wily bastards also have a disconcerting tendency to use smaller

mechs as bait, luring the over-confident player into areas where he will be outnumbered and outgunned by assault mechs, attack vehicles and automated defences. Those adversaries with a mastery of jump-jet techniques are especially dangerous, as they regularly vault the player's mech and swiftly attack the vulnerable rear armour. Worse still, there are few defeats

more humiliating than one inflicted using the infamous Death From Above manoeuvre, which should be incentive enough for the player to dispatch jump-jetting opponents with great haste.

Lamentably, the AI of the player's Lancemates leaves much to be desired. Oftentimes they are hesitant to wade into the thick of combat, and it is this unofficial doctrine of pacifism that frequently results in the untimely demise of compatriots. While the Lancemates seemingly relax in the air-conditioned comfort of their pristine steeds, loosing an occasional shot in the general direction of the aggressors, the player frequently finds his own mech on the verge of experiencing a reactor core meltdown. The pathfinding abilities of the Lancemates are equally abysmal, especially in the convoluted, grid-like city levels. On the whole, the ineptitude of the Lancemates does contribute to the difficulty of the missions, but in light of the fact that the rest of the game is virtually flawless, this is one aspect that most players should be able to overlook.

Discerning MechWarrior devotees, this modest writer included, have always considered MechWarrior 2 to be the pinnacle of the BattleTech series. But that reign of supremacy has now drawn to a close with the release of MechWarrior 4: the new king of mech simulations.

Brett Robinson

PCPP

FOR

- The mechs have never looked sexier
- More tweaking than you can poke a LRM at

AGAINST

- Questionable Lancemate AI

OVERALL

By far the best mech game yet

91%

COLIN McRAE RALLY 2.0

No-nonsense, straight-up rallying at its leanest

DETAILS

GENRE

Racing Sim

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (4 split-screen, LAN, TCP/IP)

DEVELOPER

Codemasters

PUBLISHER

Codemasters

DISTRIBUTOR

Ozisoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

PII-400, 64MB RAM, 16MB 3D Videocard

WANT

PIII-600, 128MB RAM, 32MB GeForce2

ONLINE

<http://www.codemasters.com/index2.htm>
The official game site. Yippee



www.mcraezy.com
Don't muck around, if you want Colin, this is the place to go. 'Follow the rally inch by inch!' cries the webmaster!



www.colinmcrae.com
Ostensibly the official Colin site. Ostensible because it wouldn't let me in. Damn you Flash



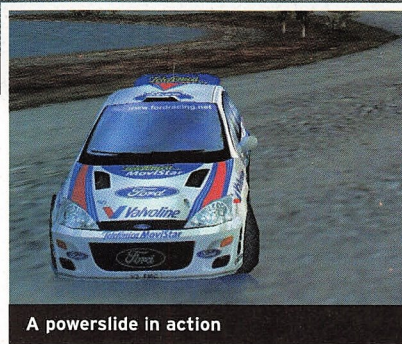
Now that's a sexy sump

He's back. With teeth-rattling intensity, Colin McRae Rally 2.0 has hit the road, in a return to pure rally simulation with none of the fluff. CMR2 offers rallying action across the globe, and simulates car handling and physics with almost anal attention to detail.

But leanness comes at a price. Colin McRae Rally 2.0 is a plain brown paper, white-label simulator and has much in common with old-fashioned titles such as Microsoft's Flight Simulator 5. Games that barely have front ends, let alone flashy embedded movies, groovy tunes and words of wisdom from sporting greats.

If driving your little car fast and loose on some of the worst roads in the world is your primary and only interest, cry hurrah, because Colin McRae Rally 2.0 wastes no time in getting you out on the track. The interface has been stripped back until not a superfluous speck of fat remains (see Babe it Must be Art).

The 3D engine shows real roads with real scenery and real terrain features. If they look a bit boring, tough; the real world is boring. There are no Sonic the Hedgehogs carved in the hills, no helicopters passing overhead or trains thundering by, no steelworks, no sailing ships and no beautiful sunsets.



A powerslide in action

Non-stick surface

You wouldn't have had any time to look at any of those things though, because trying to keep your little car on the road and at the same time beat that bastard clock will take one hundred percent of your concentration. CMR2 is about realism, and if you take a loose, gravelly corner at speed, you will slide into the embankment and smash yourself to bits on Goodyear advertisements.

The game offers much of what its predecessor offered before it. There are options for a single stage, a single rally, and a championship. Some locations are locked out until you win others, and of course the Super Special Stages make a return. But the comprehensive training section of the original has been replaced with an arcade mode in the sequel.

Arcade mode seems to go against CMR2's lean, serious new look. Arcade works as you'd expect: a circular track with a whole

WHO THE HELL'S COLIN?

Colin McRae is a Scotsman who drives little cars very fast on bad roads. For most of the nineties, he was the only person who ever won the World Rally



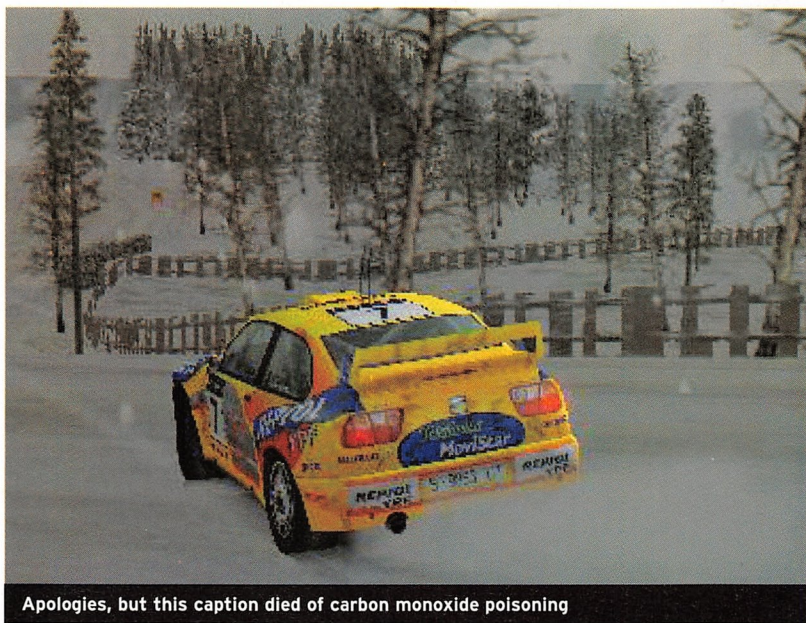
Championship. A lot of people don't understand rally driving, because it's a race in which there's only ever one car on the road. But Colin has been crashing a lot recently, so he hasn't won since 1997. And for 2000, says www.mcraezy.com, "Colin's world title hopes were finally snuffed out for another year at the recent Rally Australia. To be honest, he couldn't really expect any different, with his disastrous exit from the first leg of the event with engine failure on his Focus WRC - will he be motivated for his home event?" Who can say? He's a complex man. It's a complex and violent sport. Apparently, in 1999, Colin was FORCED to crash. By his own car! Now that's violence.

bunch of other cars on it, with much jostling and tailgating. Instead of adding to gameplay, the arcade mode works to remind the player that this game is - as pained as we are to admit it - a PlayStation port.

Anorexic

Yes, the simulation of rally driving is very good, but it was good in the original. Did we need to wait three years for the same game with fewer options? Yes, because the car physics is much more detailed in CMR2, and the visuals work more effectively. Trees now have a definite mass and presence, and while they are still 2D sprites, smashing into them seriously affects your chances of winning the stage. The graphics aren't just eye candy, they add to the simulation.

All the usual cars are here, plus Colin's own Ford Focus. Amusingly enough, if you don't make the effort and let the computer beat you to the first few places, Colin



Apologies, but this caption died of carbon monoxide poisoning

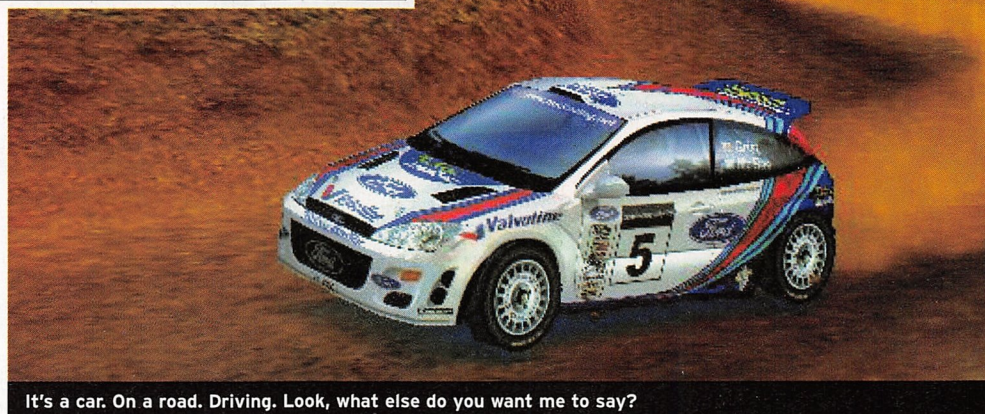
seems to win every stage and every rally. Well, it's his game.

Speaking of the drivers, CMR2 is supposed to accurately simulate many of the contemporary rallying greats (of which I can name precisely none) yet the game is too lean to provide portraits or biographies of the drivers. So once again, great men and great women are reduced to faceless algorithms, mindlessly pursuing a virtual victory, lost in simulation. Or something. More immersion in the 2000 season would have been greatly appreciated.

Identity crisis

Also, the locked-out portions of the game are irritating. Sure, they keep people coming back, making them persevere, but I thought CMR2 was a serious simulation. What does this game want to be? A rally simulator, or an arcade game with time trials, bonus stages, secret cars and Sonic the Hedgehog carved in the hills?

CMR2 was content to go for a minimalist, Flight Sim 5 look, so it should



It's a car. On a road. Driving. Look, what else do you want me to say?

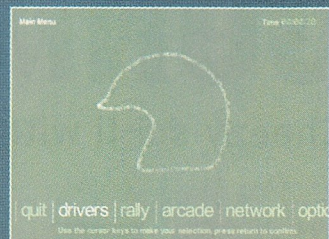
have also allowed players to select any rally, set precise environmental conditions, tweak the cars to the eighth decimal place and generally let players create the rally scenario they wanted. That would have been a true sequel to Colin McRae Rally.

Instead though, we have a slightly confused PlayStation port that nevertheless provides one of the most accurate and realistic driving simulations on the PC. It's a good game. But while the original carved itself a place in the gamers hall of champions, the sequel is far more modest.

Anthony Fordham

...BABE IT MUST BE ART

The word 'lean' pops up a lot in this review, but it's just so perfect. Take CMR2's front end. It's the leanest piece of menu work in the business. Cyan background. White text. Enigmatic particle animation, where the name 'Colin McRae' morphs into various elegant and minimalist icons. Navigation is clear, and actively works to fight stress and tooth decay. It's not just good programming. It's not just clever. It's art.



PCPP

FOR

- Mad car physics
- Sense of realism
- Lean...

AGAINST

- ...maybe too lean?
- Shows PSX roots
- Arcade or sim?

OVERALL

It wasn't broke, so they didn't fix it

85%

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

Cheezy sci-fi with the Half-Life engine? Yee-haw!

DETAILS

GENRE

Firstperson Shooter

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-32)

DEVELOPER

Rewolf/Valve

PUBLISHER

Sierra Studios

DISTRIBUTOR

Jack of all Games

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

M

NEED

PII-300, 32Mb RAM, 400Mb HDD

WANT

PII-400, 64MB RAM, 3D Videocard (D3D, OpenGL)

ONLINE

www.sierrastudios.com/games/gunman/
Another official site. Stop it, please!



www.rewolfsoftware.com/gunman/
Official sites from the people behind the man behind the big hat



www.gunmancentral.com/
A fan site dedicated to deflecting harsh reviews of Gunman. You go, friend!



Camp as a row of tents

I have a dream. It takes place in a smoky bar, on a distant moon in another galaxy, where it's always night. This bar is where the dregs of the known universe gather to look nasty while avoiding eye contact with the other dregs - especially me. I'm a bad piece of work in this dream and no one gives me any shit. Although no one is wearing cowboy suits in this dream, they could and it doesn't mess with the situation at all. In fact, big hats and chaps are so becoming that all of these mercenaries and miscreants will surely appear in them, the next time I'm there. Hopefully not grinning. I've named this dream **Gunman Chronicles**.

Think Dukes of Hazzard, think Aliens, think Jurassic Park, think Tomb Raider and either you've become confused or you're thinking of Gunman. Gunman is a total conversion (TC) of Half-Life, Valve's astonishingly popular firstperson shooter. That is, a bunch of fans got together, did their thang and gathered interest. Thereafter Valve and Sierra stepped in and took Gunman to the masses through retail vendors as a stand-alone title. The engine's the same, so the basics are the same but everything else is different. New weapons, enemies, scenery and, in a technological breakthrough, new cowboy hats!



"Ouch..."

In your face

The fact is Gunman is so much like Half-Life, it's frightening. The menu screen is a recoloured copy of the original and the introduction is strangely similar to Half Life's. The first stages of the game, where you see countless numbers of your allies crushed or or lying injured, are eerily familiar (except for the hats). Being the cynical, modern, young go-getting gamer that I am (and you are too, most likely), upon first seeing Gunman I thought, "Hmm... it's Half-Life, but it's just *not* Half Life. Could this be a crappy cash-in on an elderly engine?"

But no, as I played, I found something other than a shameless retread. The pace is quick, which means once you start moving, you're kept moving and the constantly changing environments make this a very immediate game. There's also a light spirit to the game, a stupid cowboy hat style of

CUSTOMISE THIS!



Many weapons are customisable during the game, most particularly the M.U.L.E. This works (in default) by pressing the second mouse button, which brings up an onscreen menu. You scroll through the various options that transforms your M.U.L.E. into a grenade launcher, a landmine layer or rocket launcher.

The same ammunition is used for all of these weapons, which means there is a considerable range of options for combat when compared to the genre's standard approach to weaponry. Some advice: learn to use the menus quickly, since reprogramming a weapon can bring on an awful case of the sitting ducks!

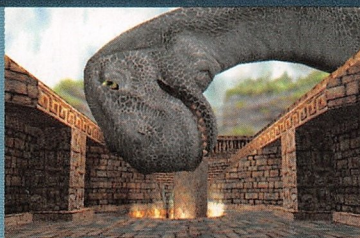
humour. The comic atmosphere is entirely different to Half-Life's seriousness and it works superbly. Early in the game, you are in the absurd situation of chasing your captors as they set off traps to kill you. It's Dukes of Hazzard all over again and you can hear their whooping and laughing as you go.

Drawing on the Hollywood action film's use of one-liners as dialogue, Gunman takes full opportunity to lay on some ridiculous voice-acting that works a treat.

The B-movie setting only helps to reinforce this comedy. As a Gunman, you are the leader of what's left of an American Civil War-look-alike army that is

OVERLOOKING THE SCRIPTWRITER

One of Half-Life's greatest strengths was the use of scripted sequences to mix up the constant shooting and corner-turning. Thankfully Rewolf's taken a leaf from Valve's book and makes use of this device to add interest and humour to Gunman. There are some fabulous thrills here. Usually a voice will boom from above ("Mwa ha haaaa!!!"), only to pull the floor from underneath you or maybe drop a couple of crocodiles in your path. There's also the familiar inclusion of the invincible enemy - usually gigantic sized. The only option here is to run and the last one out's a rotten egg. Familiar devices sure, but there's definitely a lot of variety in Gunman.



"No, really, I don't actually want to meet your friend..."

protecting the galaxy from the spread of the vicious Xenomes, an engineered species that just got meaner. At the beginning of the game, you travel to a planet where some strange readings have been recorded. It's covered with dinosaurs and looks like a level out of Tomb Raider. Things are not well as your team is ambushed there - and who do you discover alive and well? The General who you left to rot in the belly of some silicon monster (I kid you not). Well, he's pretty pissed, as you'd expect, so he's gonna try to wipe you out, for being the yellow coward chicken that you are. Throughout the game, there are plenty of nasty alien Xenomes, dinosaurs and robots of various incarnations, so there's variety if not exactly coherence.

Customisation

One of the games strongest features is its customisable weaponry. The Multiple Unit Launch Engine (M.U.L.E.) can be configured in many different ways so that it takes the place of many of the standard weapons that we know and love in the FPS genre. Nearly all of the weapons can be customised in some way. The attention to weapons is also seen in the fact that some can overheat and go postal. The weaponry department is generally very good.

Gunman is extremely strong when you consider that it is a TC where the bulk of the

work was done without the enormous budget that accompanies most games. The figure animations are crisp and impressive, especially the *really* big dinosaurs. For all of that, this is a game based on an old engine and the seams are definitely showing. While Gunman has a lot of character and there's a lot that I like about it, it's certainly not a must-have.

John Dewhurst



There's even a touch of Mad Max

PCPP

FOR

- High adventure - with hats!
- Good pacing and good weaponry

AGAINST

- Old engine dressed in lamb's clothing

OVERALL

A fun and playable revision of the first-person shooter

80%

PROJECT IGI

Can you survive without hitting F12 every ten metres?

DETAILS

GENRE

Action

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Innerloop

PUBLISHER

Eidos

DISTRIBUTOR

Ozisoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

M

NEED

PII-300, 64Mb RAM,
500Mb HDD, 3D
Videocard (D3D)

WANT

PIII-500, 128Mb
RAM, 16Mb 3D
Videocard (D3D)

ONLINE

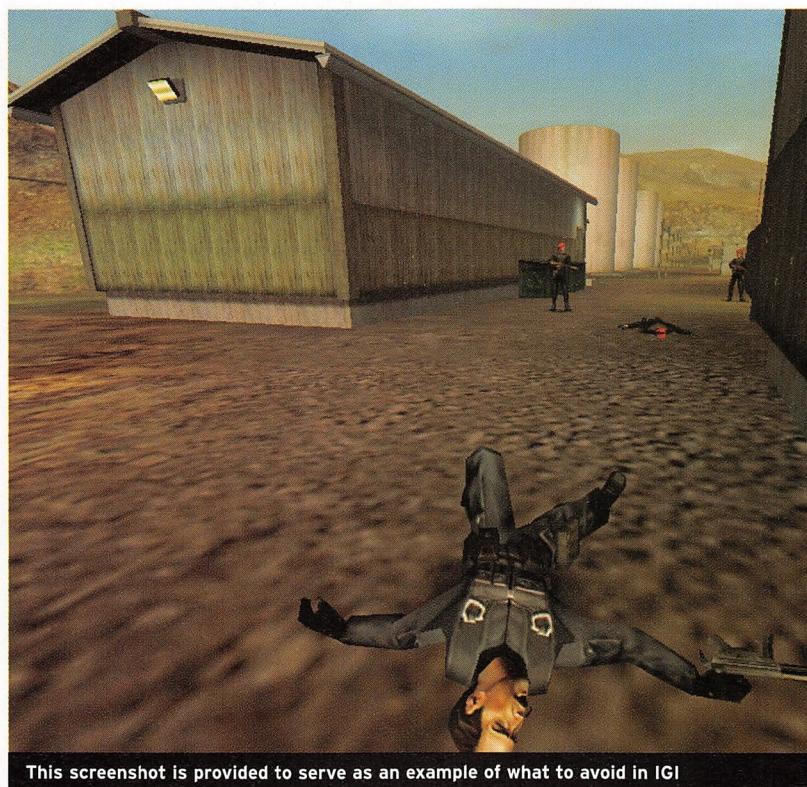
www.innerloop.com
IGI's developer. Say
hello in Norwegian



www.projectigi.com
Fan site with forums
& downloads aplenty



www.gpsmarketplace.com
Purchase your very
own GPS



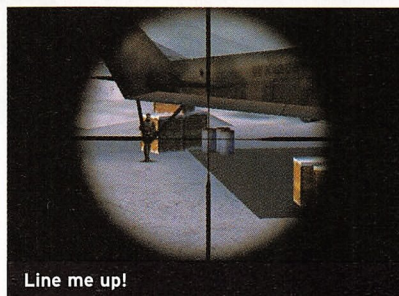
This screenshot is provided to serve as an example of what to avoid in IGI

Let me begin by asking a question. What is your position on the issue of being able to save the game during a level or mission? Broadly speaking, there are two distinct schools of thought on the matter. One, players should have the right to play a game as they please, and hence must be able to save whenever the whim strikes. Two, the save function is a tool of the designers, and hence can be limited or restricted to suit the type of game experience they wish to create.

Indulge me when I suggest you pause for a few moments to consider the above arguments - for and against - before continuing to read the remainder of this review. It's extremely important, you see. Maybe not quite as important as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, the outcome of the US presidential election or whether the ABC reruns episodes of Metal Mickey, but still of sufficient significance to put a couple of pages of your favourite magazine on hold for a minute or two...

Rows of tense

Back with me? Right, the reason behind drawing attention to what is to most people a seemingly minor aspect of game design, is that Innerloop's debut release will live or fall



Line me up!

by which side of the savegame divide you occupy. Although effortlessly competent - and often exceptional - in nearly every area a firstperson action title should be, Project IGI *does not* allow the player to save the game whilst a mission is in progress.

Is this a flaw? The short answer: no, it isn't. The long answer: it will undoubtedly alienate a lot of players, but - hey - that's their loss. Dismiss IGI for this reason and an engrossing and suspense-filled experience will pass you by.

Whenever a developer decides to disable the player's option to save at any point, an enormous amount of faith is thus placed in the capacity of the game's fundamental mechanics to withstand constant repetition. Reduced to their essential elements, Project IGI's mechanics are thus: the player, armed



The technical term for this: Nice Shot

LOST TOYS



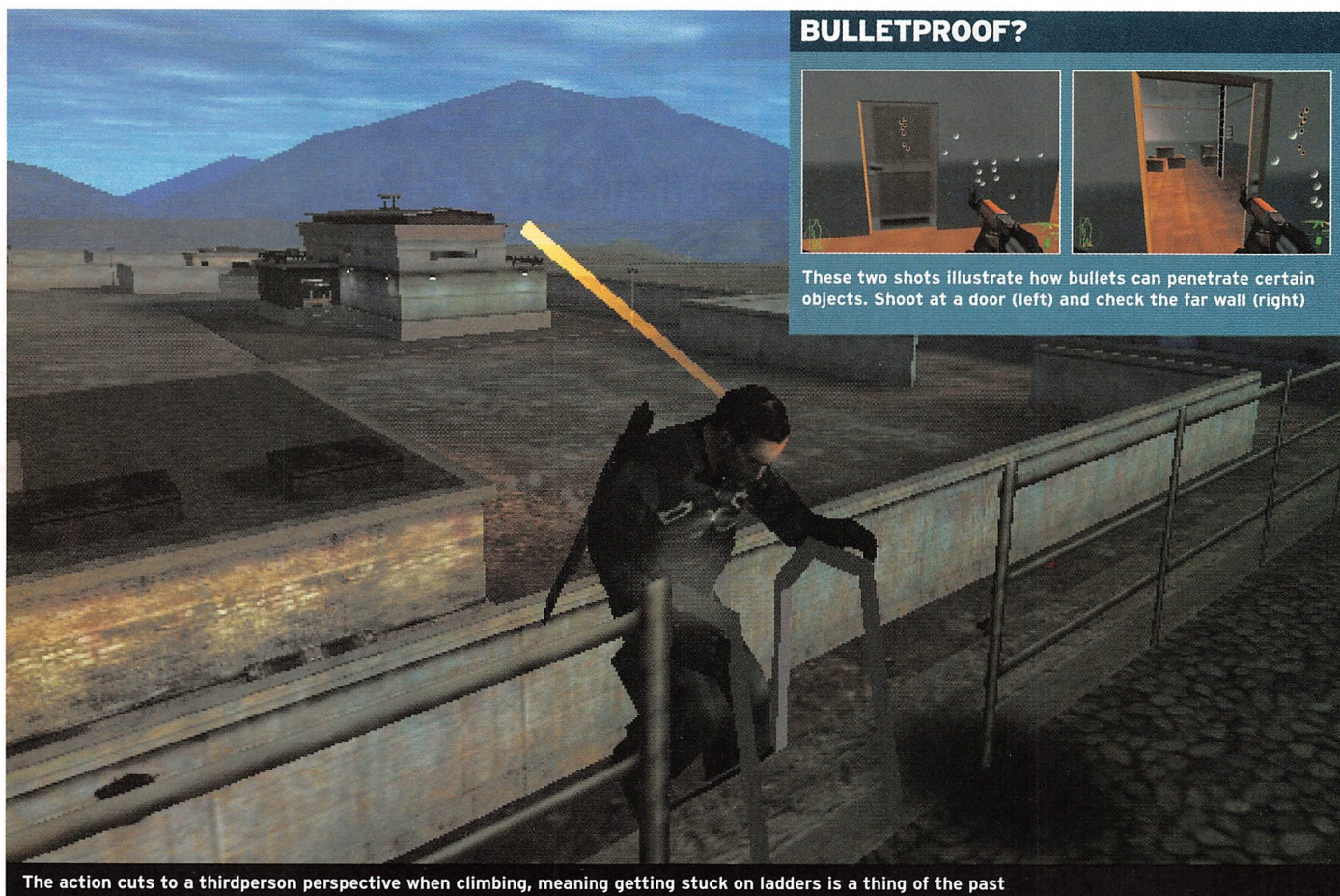
The illusion of realism is broken on occasion. Enemy AI too often goes missing in action, resulting in some less-than-convincing encounters. Perhaps the biggest gripe is that although, according to the narrative, the missions follow on from the last, Jones always begins each new task with the default weapons.

After securing the powerful Dragunov (sniper rifle) in the first mission, Jones steals then drives a truck to the location of the second, only to (presumably) throw away the best weapon in the game en route. It's a cheap and annoying way to balance the game.

with some guns; a military compound of varying size and detail; a series of objectives located within said compound. Although progress through the objectives is linear - complete A before attempting B - the manner in which each can be accomplished is entirely in the player's hands. The freedom inherent in such design is the primary reason why the savegame issue is a bit of a non-starter. If you die, then you're forced to restart the mission, but you're under no obligation to retrace your steps in any way.

Mere mortal

Indeed, the lack of a save option serves to enhance the tension and vulnerability the player *should* feel during any FPS that strives towards realism. The knowledge that only a few hits (or just one, if it's a head-shot) can



BULLETPROOF?



These two shots illustrate how bullets can penetrate certain objects. Shoot at a door (left) and check the far wall (right)

The action cuts to a thirdperson perspective when climbing, meaning getting stuck on ladders is a thing of the past

kill you *plus* not being able to rely on a quick reload if it all goes wrong, combine to make IGI very different to the average FPS. The type of gamer who doesn't appreciate the thrill and satisfaction of completing a mission with palms soaked in sweat and nerves shot to pieces will not find much to their liking here.



Play IGI like Quake or Elite Force and your lifespan will be measured in seconds. Adopt a Half-Life or No One Lives Forever approach and you'll fare better, but still suffer from frequent blunders into unwinnable face-offs. Instead, to find success (and enjoyment), it's crucial to show a good deal of patience and to *think* before every move. Guard patrol routes must be studied with either binoculars or the satellite radar, security cameras must be avoided or disabled (through shooting them or hacking a computer), and entrance and exit points must be evaluated prior to taking action.

The most important - yet often breathtakingly difficult - factor is to ensure no one notices your presence whatsoever. This is where another layer of tactical dexterity comes into play: you need to choose the weapon most suitable for the occasion. Silent kills are possible with a knife to the head of an unsuspecting enemy or thanks to the use of a suppressor, while the sniping option also minimises any risk factor. Trickier situations might call for an Uzi round into a crowded room, a quick dive for cover as the guard outside investigates the commotion, followed by a close-range shotgun blast when he enters the building.

The fact that bullets can penetrate certain structures (walls, crates, windows, even bodies) also opens up a range of tactical avenues (see Bulletproof?).

Whichever method you decide upon, it's imperative that it results in a clean kill - you don't want injured guards alerting the entire base and hunting you down.

Vantage point

Wide open play areas remain the game's constant strength throughout the twenty missions. Ex-SAS agent Jones is on a Bondesque escapade, attempting to avert a nuclear catastrophe. Much of the action is situated in isolated bases somewhere in the wintry, mountainous wastelands of Eastern Europe. Innerloop's 3D engine has been optimised to depict vast spaces; in fact, it's usually possible to see the entire playfield from your hiding spot on a nearby hill or while surveying the scene from atop one of the ubiquitous watchtowers.

Such a remarkable view distance, however, comes at a cost. Texture detail is low, something that is particularly evident upon entering the bland and sparsely decorated interiors. If you've ever wondered why the majority of firstperson games take place in tight, corridor-based environments, here's the reason. More worrying is the lack of variety between missions - if you've seen one terrorist compound, you have seen them all.

Project IGI is an extremely accomplished tactical shooter. Perhaps it doesn't possess mass appeal, but the hardcore will find it a gripping and compelling challenge.

David Wildgoose

PCPP

FOR

- Excellent range of weaponry
- A stern challenge

AGAINST

- Samey locations
- Glitches in the AI
- Weapons don't carry over

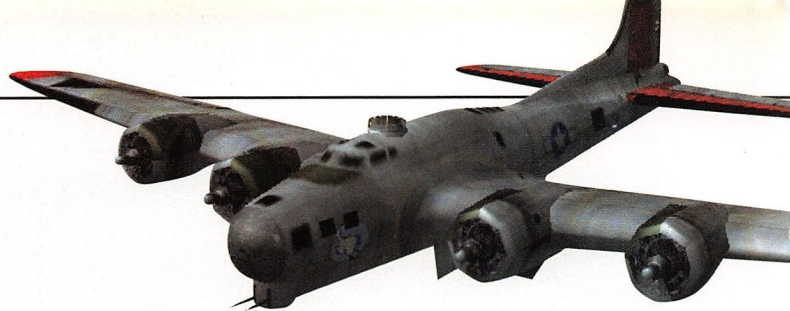
OVERALL

IGI is a genuine thinking man's firstperson shooter

86%

B-17 2

No multiplayer, but an exceptional flight sim still awaits



DETAILS

GENRE

Flight Sim

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Microprose

PUBLISHER

Hasbro

DISTRIBUTOR

Hasbro

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G8

NEED

PII-300, 128Mb
RAM, 700Gb HD, 3D
Videocard (D3D)

WANT

PII-600, 256Mb RAM

Time 08:00
Altitude 3004 ft
Speed 149 mph
Heading 356



ONLINE

www.b17flyingfortress.com

All you need to know about the game is at the official website, and those with a taste for reality will enjoy the B-17 Virtual Tour and the official 8th Airforce Museum site.

B-17
FLYING FORTRESS
a virtual tour



www.b-17.com



www.8afmuseum.com



Des fails his formation flying course

Up close and personal...

LOOK OUT BELOW!



The reason we're all up here today... break out the Norden Bombsight; find the target; open bomb doors; steady... bombs away!

Back in May of last year (PCPP#48) we urged Microprose to take the time needed to get B-17 right, and I'm happy to report that that's exactly what has been done. Sure, the decision to drop the multiplayer component was a major disappointment, but it's still a remarkable experience, incorporating all that's good and wholesome in strategic, tactical and firstperson shooter play. B-17 is genre-busting at its very best, and fans of just about any style of military game are in for a treat.

In a major departure from the traditional flight sim, Microprose puts you at the controls of a four-engined B-17 Flying Fortress during the heaviest fighting of WWII. Probably the most famous bombers of the war, unescorted Flying Fortress' carried crews of 10 into the

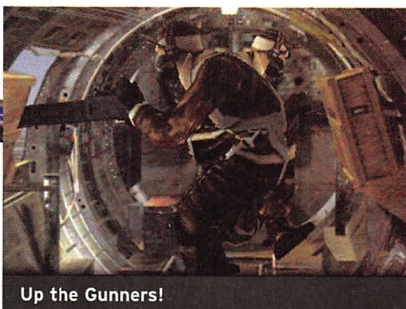
heart of occupied Europe in broad daylight, using an awesome array of firepower to fight their way through interceptor squadrons and anti-aircraft defences. Bombing missions were truly a team effort, and B-17 captures the whole experience by letting players jump between crew stations at will. Piloting, navigating, bombing or shooting - all can be experienced while the AI takes care (intelligently) of everything else.

Long haul logistics

Comprehensive training and a solid interface are critical in a game that tries to cover so much, and Microprose makes a reasonable fist of tackling both issues. Players will have a very good feel for general crew duties by the end of the tutorial, with the opportunity to practice specific functions in a small

number of fairly average training missions. If you're still unsure then you can just sit back and watch the AI get on with it, before taking charge in one of the quick action missions - although it must be said that there are nowhere near enough of these! This solid introduction is complemented by a gem of an interface, incorporating mouse control, pop-up panels, multiple views from all crew stations, and a single keystroke to switch between AI and manual control.

Fighting the war from the air was all about surviving over the long haul, and B-17's two campaigns reproduce the atmosphere of bomber operations very well indeed. Players can fight through in charge of either a single aircraft or an entire squadron, choosing responsibility for just their own crew or all aspects of planning, targeting and logistics.



Up the Gunners!



Searching for crop circles



Engage afterburners! Er, sorry, wrong plane...

And there are plenty of nice touches to add to the period feel and the sense of being part of something bigger. Aircraft names and artwork can be specified; crews gain experience as missions progress, and success is determined by both target effect and crew survivability. Just to help with the bonding process, names can also be entered for all crew members - a great touch that draws you a little further into the game world.

Flight check

There's so much in this game that outlining a typical mission is probably the best way to let you know what it's all about. First port of call is the briefing room, where you can see the objectives, check out the route, and watch aerial footage of the target area. Once you're clued up, you sign for mission orders (great touch!),

runway. After take-off, you may wait for the squadron to form up before you put on your navigator's cap and confirm the route.

Now it starts to get interesting! When the enemy fighters turn up, you can hide on the flight deck or jump to one of six machinegun positions and blaze away to defend your ship. Alternatively, you may prefer to switch to one of the seven flyable fighters and dogfight it out for either side. If you stay on board then you'll need to render first aid as necessary, and it's probably best to make sure your parachute is close at hand. Having made it through fighter screens and Ack Ack, keeps your ears open for the final approach turn, grab hold of the Norden bombsight, and commence the run in. Bombs away! Now it's just a matter of making it home on three engines with two wounded crew members - a doddle really.

visually inspect your aircraft and occupy the radio operator's station to wait for the order to go. When word comes through, it's off to the pilot's seat to finish the pre-flight checks and taxi to the

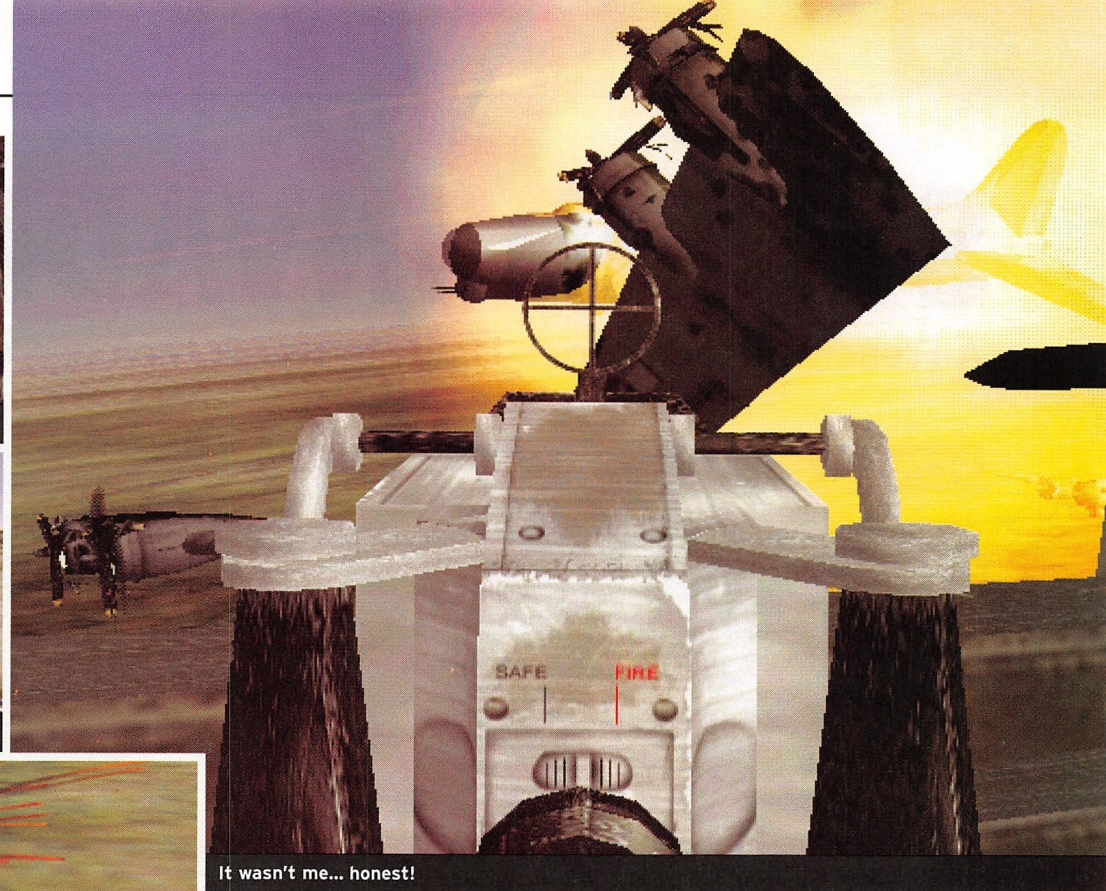
Putting the atmospheric to one side, B-17 will also satisfy the simulation purists. It flies like a prop-driven bomber - no fancy turns or quick evasive manoeuvres here! Pilots have up to six control panels, each incorporating active switches and gauges, and all aspects of the flight model are configurable. Damage modelling is first class visually and in effect, and details such as smoke, grime, reflections and control surfaces are expertly handled.

On top of that, the exterior views can only be described as beautiful - absolutely the best I've seen. Watching a squadron of B-17's fly over the green fields of England is like looking at a painting (*Except it actually moves* - Ed), and the individual aircraft models are nothing short of stunning - although it all comes at the price of high end system requirements.

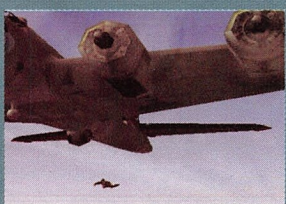
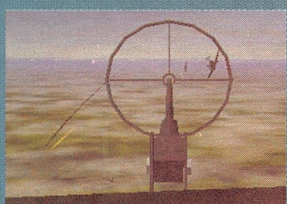
Despite the lack of cooperative multiplayer, B-17 Flying Fortress: The Mighty Eighth lives up to most of the expectations raised over the last couple of years. Combining simulation, FPS and tactical management in a way that hasn't been seen before, the game offers a whole new approach to the well-trodden WWII flight sim path. Add a great flight model, a gripping atmosphere, and superb graphics, and B-17 is worth a closer look by sim veterans, role-players and FPS fans alike.

Major Des McNicholas

It wasn't me... honest!



ONE-ARMED PAPER HANGERS HEAVEN!



Once things hot up B-17 is all about choices. Stay at the controls and fly on; man the turrets; jump to an escort... or jump overboard!

PCPP

FOR

- Innovative concept
- Genre busting
- Stunning graphics

AGAINST

- Some high-end requirements
- No multiplayer capability
- Not enough quick action missions

OVERALL

Multiplay B-17 would be heaven, but this isn't far off!

90%

STUPID INVADERS

A French cartoon series is out to tweak the nose of LucasArts

DETAILS

GENRE

Adventure

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Xilam

PUBLISHER

Ubisoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Ubisoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

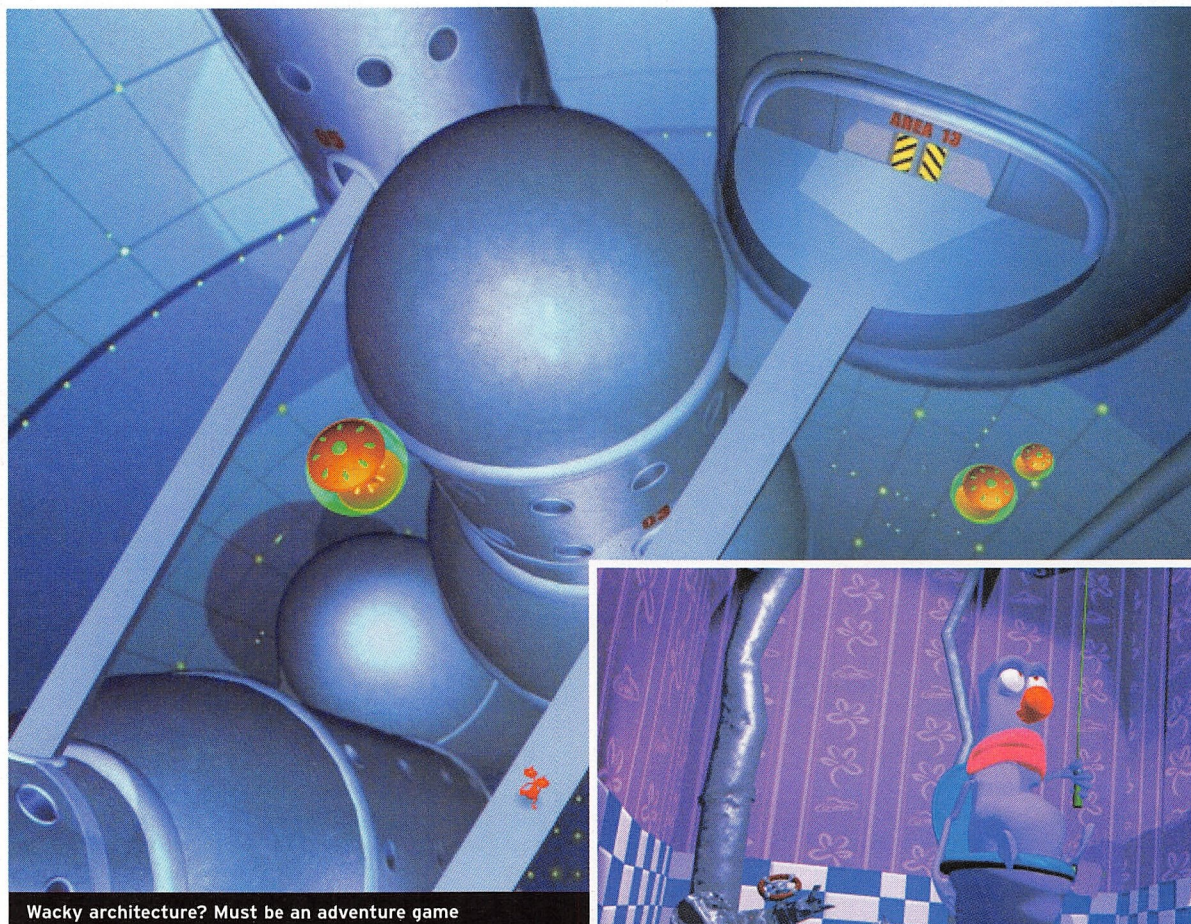
G

NEED

P-200, 32Mb RAM,
4x CD

WANT

PII-300, 64Mb RAM,
32x CD



Wacky architecture? Must be an adventure game

I attended a convention for adventure game developers in Luxembourg recently. Actually it seemed a lot more like the Rooty Hill RSL club, but I was too polite to ask why my hosts had blindfolded me and put me in a washing machine for 18 hours. I couldn't help noticing what a despondent lot they all were. All they did was complain about how their fans had abandoned them and how publishers crossed to the other side of the street whenever they saw them out and about.

The real finisher though was the appearance of David Attenborough and a camera crew wanting to know if they could put a slo-mo camera in the ceiling to capture some dramatic footage of the developers' final deathroes. They even had a life-sized diorama of last year's E3 convention, complete with Muppet PR people and animatronic publishers to allow them to film some 'location shots' of the developers' survival tactics in the wild. There was some degree of entertainment when a mobile phone sent the animatronic publishers haywire, tearing all the Muppet PR people limb from limb, but other than that things were pretty grim.

Garlic bread

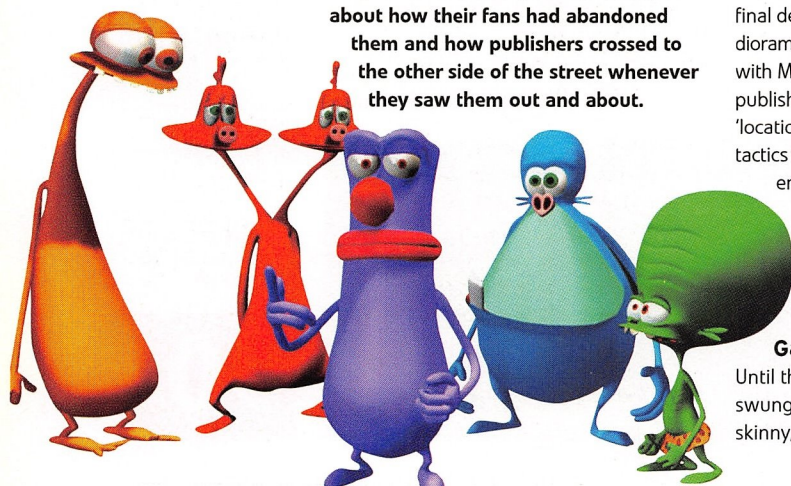
Until the French showed up that is. They swung in all wreathed in Garlic and long, skinny, useless loaves of bread. Riding

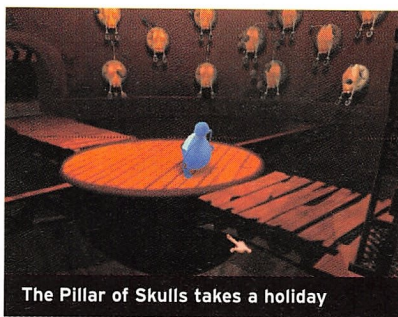


Ah, it's just like the Hyper office...

bicycles and wearing stripey shirts, there were even several with berets, I swear. And under their arms they all had copies of Stupid Invaders, which they quickly brandished about while shouting incomprehensible French curses and pinching all the disfigured PR Muppets on the backside.

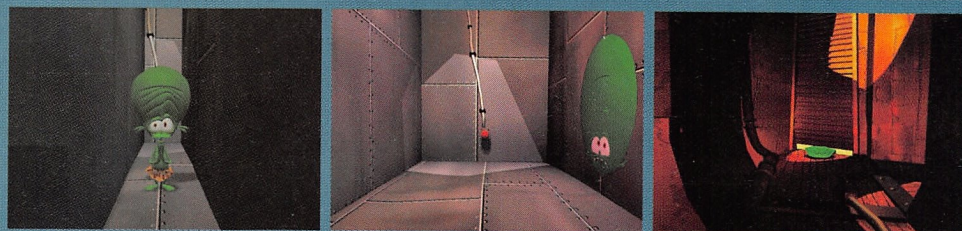
France, you see, remains alone in the world as the one country where adventure games have never waned in popularity, probably due to their reverence of comic artists and animators in general, and the releases have never really slowed down over there. In fact they're always looking for new stories to turn into adventure games and they had a perfect fit for the genre already in a local cartoon series called Space Goofs ("Les Zinzins de l'Espace").



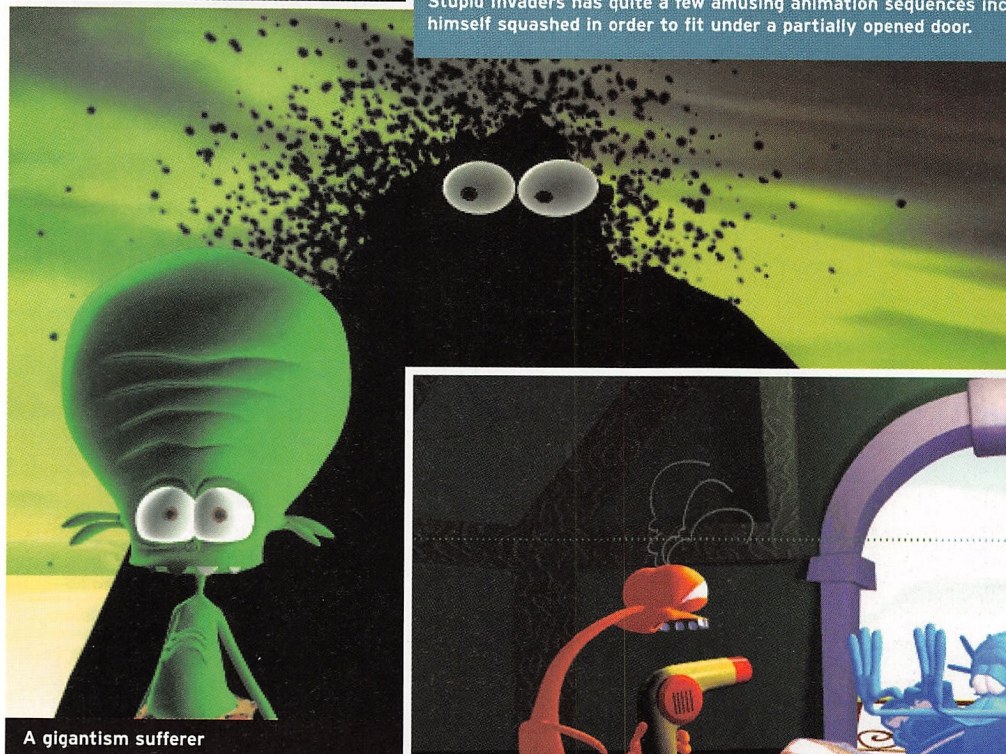


The Pillar of Skulls takes a holiday

SOME CANDY TALKIN'



Stupid Invaders has quite a few amusing animation sequences including this one where Candy needs to get himself squashed in order to fit under a partially opened door.



A gigantism sufferer

Sadly it's never been aired here; sad because one of the show's writers previously worked on Ren and Stimpy. But local gamers can get a taste of the show's charm and humour through Stupid Invaders and maybe create enough interest to get the TV show out here.

Death in disguise

Stupid Invaders is a pretty traditional point-and-click adventure game with nothing much to excite the gamer when it comes to amazing technical innovations or the creative use of bouncing cleavages. Adventure games are all about the narrative and the puzzles and Stupid Invaders has plenty of both.

There isn't much dialogue to speak of - or to speak at all for that matter - and this isn't a game where you have to keep every conversation you've had with every NPC in your head in case it gave you vital information regarding the game. The most common kinds of conversation involve someone insulting or killing you, or both. Speaking of killing, the developer has laid a few nasty traps for the unwary gamer and objects that seem like an obvious solution to a problem often turn out to be death in disguise. Save often.

The puzzles - heart of any adventure game - are mostly good, but as is usually the case in this genre there are a few ridiculous ones

which can't be solved by any means other than trial and error. Most take the expected form of needing the right object to stick in the right hole/door/ appendage so, also as expected, trawling every nook and cranny of every room becomes a familiar pastime as you play.

The Space Goofs cartoon features five different characters and you get to adventure with all of them as the game progresses. Etno the brainy one, Candy the transvestite, Gorgious the grumpy bastard, Bud the dope and Stereo the two-headed space cadet. This feature would have been more interesting had the characters been given different abilities, but they all play in the same way and so the potential of this has been wasted somewhat.

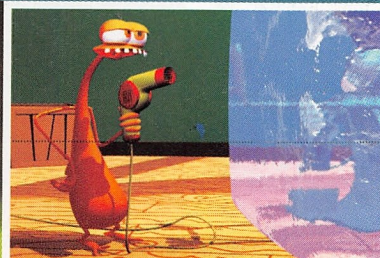
As you'd expect from a game based on an animated series, with director Thomas Szabo responsible for both, the graphics are slick

and colourful and the animation superb. The detailed animation does mean a bit of a wait whenever your character has to move a long way or do something rather involved, but it's worth it to be able to play what is as much an interactive cartoon as an adventure game.

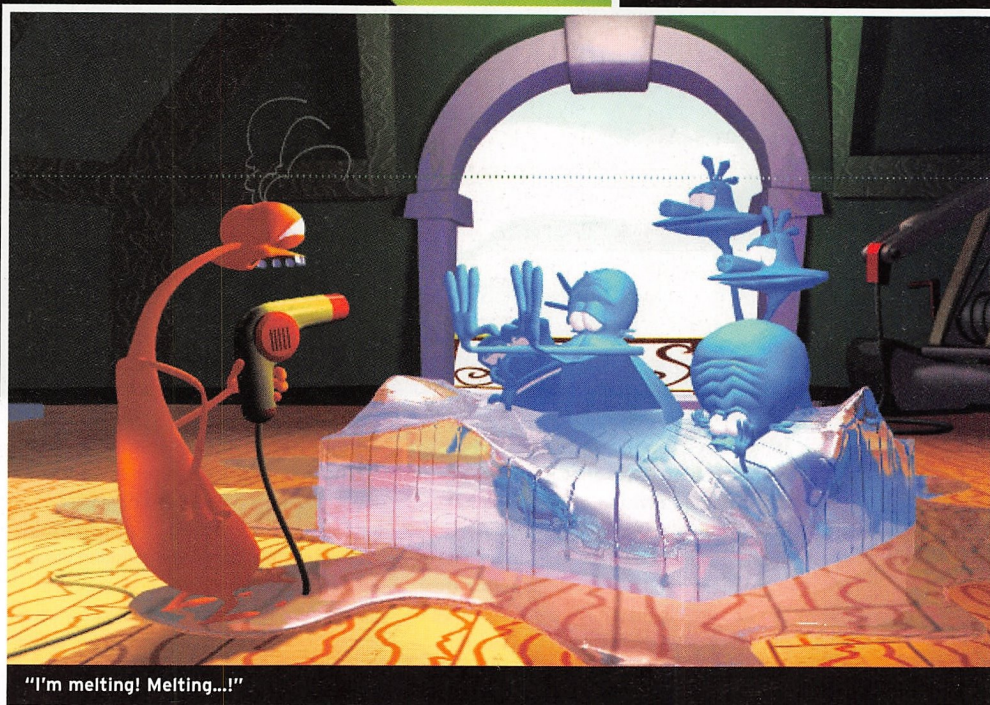
Of course being a 2D game, Stupid Invaders doesn't compare as favorably against Escape from Monkey Island in the visual stakes, but we'll grant those Frenchies one thing: the standard of humour in Stupid Invaders leaves the painful, hammy, self-knowing and rather tired style of Lucas Arts for dead (*Ooh, controversial - Ed*).

With one of those long cricket-filled Australian summers upon us, those looking to escape into a brighter, stupider world might find it here.

George Soropos



Nothing dental surgery wouldn't fix



"I'm melting! Melting...!"

PCPP

FOR

- Great animation
- Excellent locations
- Nice humour

AGAINST

- The rather old, illogical puzzles
- Frustrating

OVERALL

Adventure gaming is definitely back

85%

FIFA 2001

The daddy of football sims is back, in another incremental incarnation

DETAILS

GENRE

Sport

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-8)

DEVELOPER

EA Sports

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

DISTRIBUTOR

Electronic Arts

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

PII-300, 32Mb RAM,
3D Videocard (D3D),
4xCD

WANT

PIII-450, 128Mb RAM,
16Mb Videocard,
cable internet

ONLINE

www.fifa2001.com
Officially recognised
as the official site



workshop.fifa2001.com
Another site worth
investigating



PCPP

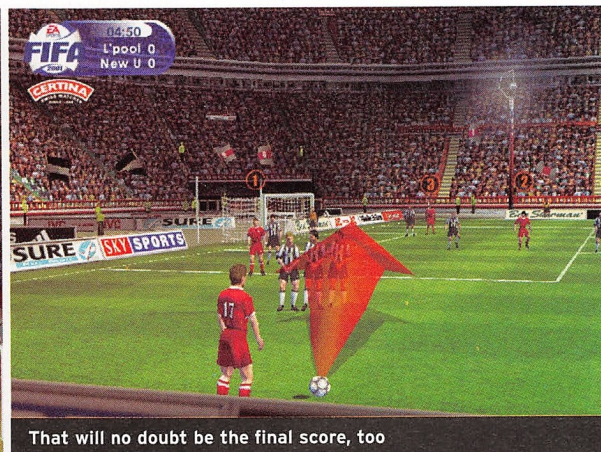
OVERALL

The best there is,
but still needs
some work

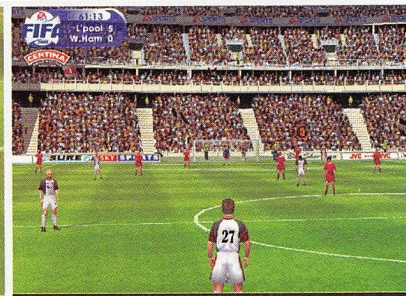
84%



Don't they know that a running track around the pitch ruins the atmosphere?



That will no doubt be the final score, too



Where did West Ham get that away strip?

Oh yes, another in the now long-running FIFA series. Over the years the Canadian division of EA Sports has been gradually improving the FIFA games - a little bit here, a little bit there - and there's still a ways to go before they can boast that they have truly captured the essence of the beautiful game. But with each new release they do get a bit closer, and FIFA 2001 is no exception.

Initial impressions of 2001 aren't great. The pitch has been made bigger so as to reflect the space available to players on a real pitch, rather than the claustrophobic feel of previous titles. The trick moves available have been cut back to just four, and the fallibility of players and 'keepers has been slightly increased to add some randomness to play, as well as the usual slight improvement in graphics, motion capture, and eye candy such as the crowd animation and subs bench. On paper, all good things for the development team to have implemented, but after a few hours of play against both the computer and human opponents, 2001 doesn't feel like a game of football. Instead, it's like a computer game where if you hit the right buttons at the right time you get a reward, in this case a goal or two.

An epiphany

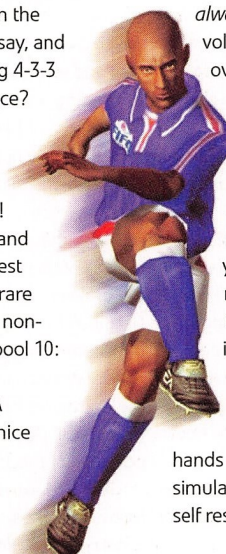
Patience reaps rewards, as someone no doubt said. After a while, an epiphany of sorts strikes: instead the game is played as if it is a real match; drawing opposition players towards the ball carrier then releasing the pass to the now free forward, quick switches of play to where the space was, drawing the opposition forward out of position by passing the ball around the defenders all works a treat. Magic! 'If it's in the game it's in the game', they say, and it really is. Opposition playing 4-3-3 and overrunning your defence? Switch to a wingback 5-3-2 formation, set your tactics to counterattack and cut them apart out wide! Lovely! Games were tight, fast, fun and furious - apart from the lowest difficulty setting it was very rare for a game to end up with a non-realistic result like, say Liverpool 10: West Ham 0 (Nnngh! - Ed).

This is not to say that EA Sports can sit back, have a nice cup of Canadian tea, and murmur to themselves happily, "Well, we got that one perfect, eh!". There are

still improvements that need to be made, and some annoying oversights. One of the greatest criticisms leveled at the FIFA series has been the easily exploitable 'trick moves' that can be used almost continually, ruining the realism and ruining the game in many cases. In FIFA 2001, the problem is not as bad as previous releases, as it is comparatively easier to defend. Still, any free kick in enemy territory or a corner will *always* result in a goal once you go for a volleyed shot (or, more likely, an overhead shot). Still, I guess that's something that might be fixed in FIFA 2002.

There are a few other problems here and there: the AI seems to get away with a lot of slide tackles from behind in the box (while you never do), in 'World Class' setting matches it uses skill moves to evade tackles far too often, the newly implemented powerbar for shooting skips the 'power-up' stage sometimes, and a few other bits and bobs. It's still the best in the series though, and hands down the best action football simulation for the PC. A must-have for any self-respecting fan of the beautiful game.

Gareth Jones



MERCEDES BENZ TRUCK RACING

Yes, I know I'm on the wrong side of the road, I... *BLAM*

DETAILS

GENRE

Keep on truckin'

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Synetic

PUBLISHER

THQ

DISTRIBUTOR

THQ

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

PII-333, 64Mb RAM,
16Mb 3D Videocard

WANT

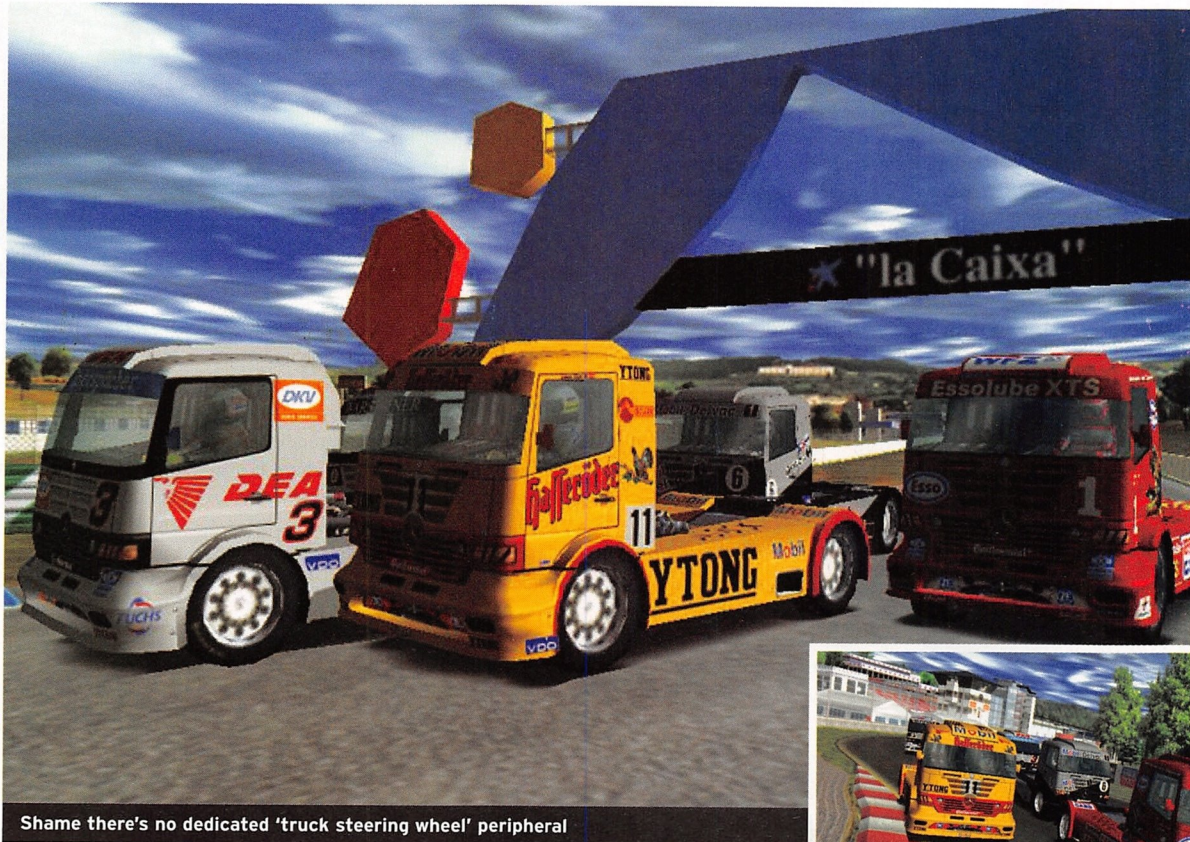
PII-500, 128Mb RAM,
32Mb 3D Videocard

ONLINE

www.mbtr.de/eng
English language
home of MBTR. Ich
spreche kein deutsch



www.thq.de
THQ's home page



Shame there's no dedicated 'truck steering wheel' peripheral



Big trucks do make for tight racing

Racing games have three main gameplay types. These dominate the genre to an extent that they can be applied to every racer available, regardless of whether they contain trucks, carts or shopping trolleys. These are:

1. Arcade style crash-em-ups
2. Anally retentive simulation games with gears and gauges up to Waazoo
3. Games that encourage the player to turn their vehicle around and direct it full speed in the wrong direction towards oncoming traffic... because it 'sounds like a bit of fun'

Slow and steady

Mercedes Benz Truck Racing is one of the latter type and I will give you half an hour tops before you realise that there is absolutely nothing stopping you from smashing the other vehicles into orbit.

Don't misconstrue that, however. When you eventually do crack and swing your large truck around to face its fiery doom, it isn't because you're sadistic and hoping to re-enact one of those fun 'Stop, Revive, Survive' commercials. Rather it's because you're bored.

Boredom can make people do strange things. For instance, while playing MBTR, I spent over 15 minutes trying to guide my truck through a tiny gap in the fence to get to - and hopefully run over - the crowd on the other side. I'm not a bloodthirsty psychopath (and what's the betting Ed is going to put a little 'You aren't?' comment in there? (*Damn - One-upped Ed*)). It's just that trying to pulverise the crowd into a pudding of blood and bone seemed like the most entertaining thing to do at the time.

Loses the race

And, sadly, it was. MBTR just isn't a fun game. Sure, driving very nice looking semis around to an annoying 80s metal soundtrack is entertaining for a while, but the fun quickly wears off as a sad realisation comes to light: trucks are slow. This may not come as a surprise to many of you. Regardless, it is worth pointing out the obvious because, as MBTR testifies, this fact really makes for a tedious gaming experience.

A simple hard and fast rule in racing gaming states: if the game plays slow, put in lots of technical options to make up for it. MBTR not only flagrantly ignores this rule, it runs over it with a 10 tonne diesel juggernaut.

There really is very little good to be said about this game. I tried it, I didn't like it and I expect you probably won't either. If fans of this type of thing actually exist, then I am sure they will like it. But for the rest of us? No, siree Bob.

Daniel Staines



PCPP

OVERALL

Boring until you realise that the other truck was 'asking for it'. Then still boring.

55%

METAL GEAR SOLID

A console conversion you can play in hi-res!

DETAILS

GENRE

Action

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Konami

PUBLISHER

Microsoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Microsoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

M

NEED

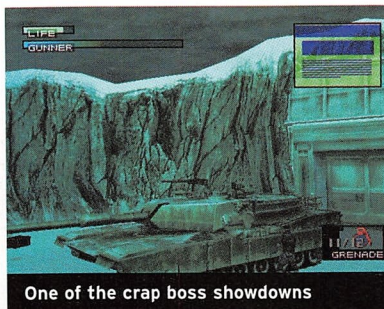
P-200,
32Mb
RAM

WANT

PII-300, 3D
Videocard

With a cardboard box and pack of cigarettes amongst the more useful items in the player's equipment, Metal Gear Solid is nothing if not inventive. Hailed as a masterpiece on its PlayStation debut over two years ago, Konami's game of "Tactical Espionage Action" was in many ways a startling experience. But the biggest surprise in store for those who will encounter it for the first time on the PC is just how primitive and clumsy it can be.

To begin with there is the thirdperson perspective of the action afforded to the player; so limited is the view that more time is spent watching the radar than hero Solid Snake's immediate surroundings. Variety is perhaps the game's greatest strength, as you can rarely guess what new challenge



One of the crap boss showdowns



Stylish cinematography par excellence

awaits Snake around each corner. However, ultimately the gameplay boils down to alternating between stealth sequences that pale next to Thief - even if they are carried off with more style - and very traditional end-of-level boss showdowns where all prior stealth tactics are regrettably abandoned in favour of exploiting each opponent's fatal weakness.

Add to this the fact that much of the game consists of lengthy cutscenes and non-interactive conversations, and I suspect most players will be left pondering what the fuss was about.

Yet MGS is terrifically entertaining. The espionage elements echo Bond at his peak, while the narrative's grip remains firm thanks to its clever pacing rather than the obvious melodrama and implausibility. A different class on the PlayStation, on the PC MGS is surpassed on all counts by the virtuoso Deus Ex.

David Wildgoose

PCPP

OVERALL

Effortlessly playable despite its flaws

78%

BASS AVENGER

Another Hilarious Parody (sic) from Hypnotix. Be afraid. Be very afraid

DETAILS

GENRE

TBA

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Hypnotix

PUBLISHER

Simon & Schuster

DISTRIBUTOR

Havas

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

Pentium, CD-ROM

WANT

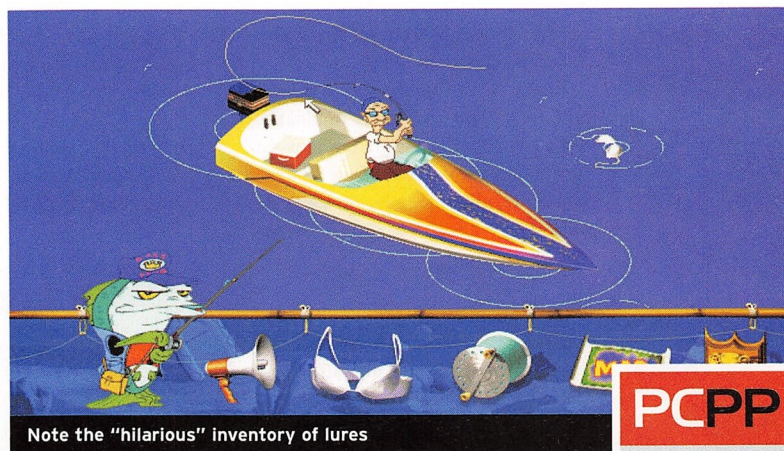
The Beast
(see page 112)

Here in the PC PowerPlay office, the Bass Avenger box attracted plenty of attention. The odd thing was that everyone read the blurb on the back in exactly the same way. "Another hilarious parody from the geniuses who... (pause, double-take) ...the geniuses?"

So, are Hypnotix geniuses? Well, if you define a genius as someone who has an exceptional level of intelligence, and routinely sets new boundaries in science, the arts, technology, philosophy, then Hypnotix are not geniuses. But if you define a genius as someone who cobbles together a bunch of animations and unfunny jokes and calls it an hilarious parody, then Hypnotix are indeed geniuses.

Bass Avenger is a complete waste of time. The concept is so obvious it's hardly worth describing, but what the hell. You are the bass and you *avenge* the deaths of other bass, you are a *bass avenger*.

Basically, you cruise around a lake looking for fishermen, and then try to entice them with a collection of gut-



Note the "hilarious" inventory of lures

bustingly funny lures, such as a bra, a six-pack, money and pizza.

'Limited' describes the replay value of this game. Once you've heard three of the 'jokes' you can predict the other three, and not even a fish in a hat doing an impression of Marlon Brando can hold your attention. This is not my opinion. This is fact.

Bass Avenger is the kind of game you might download for free from a comedy site, but only if it was a small download. Do not buy it.

Anthony Fordham

PCPP

OVERALL

At least Trophy Bass 3D made some sort of effort

8%

DEEP FIGHTER

This is a sub-standard game. Ho ho ho...!

DETAILS

GENRE

Action

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Criterion

PUBLISHER

Ubisoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Ubisoft

AVAILABLE

G

RATING

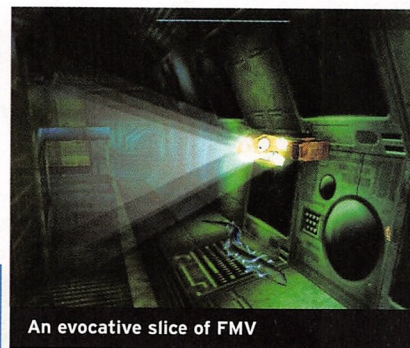
Now

NEED

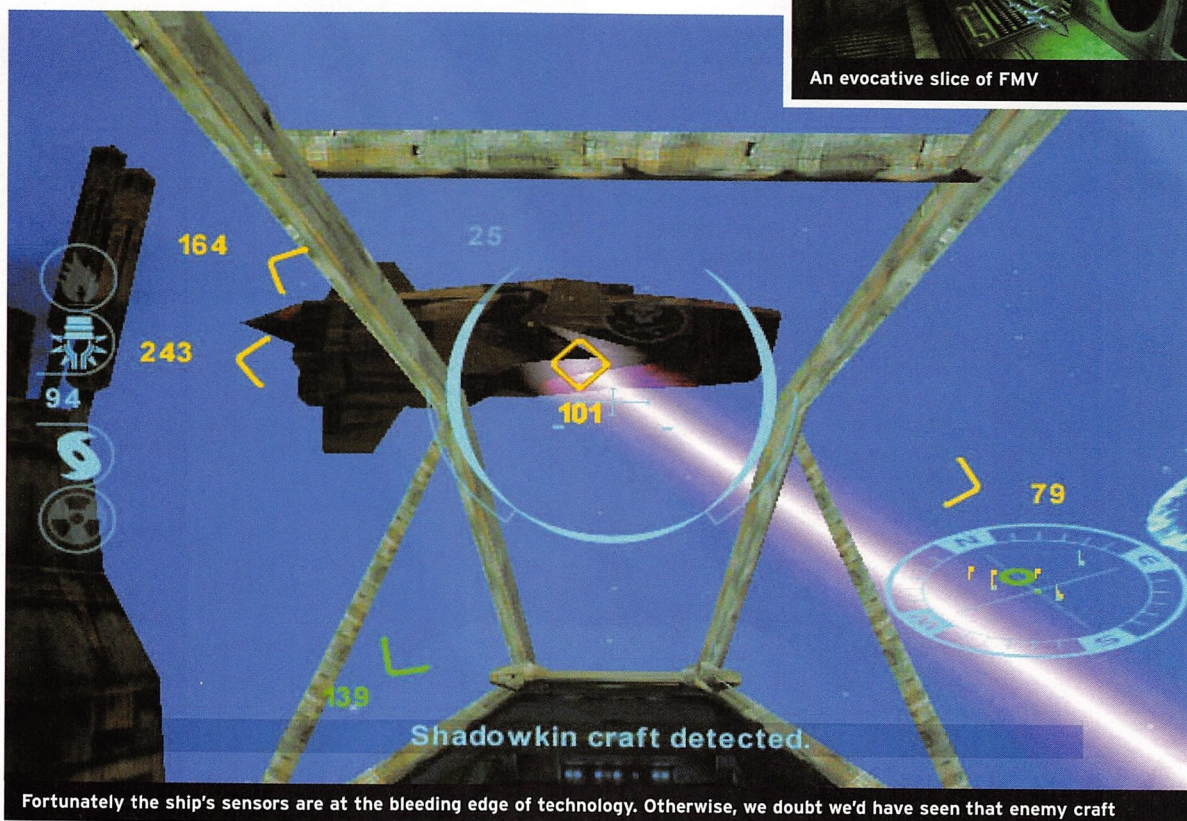
PII-233, 32Mb RAM,
3D Videocard

WANT

PII-300, 64Mb RAM



An evocative slice of FMV



Fortunately the ship's sensors are at the bleeding edge of technology. Otherwise, we doubt we'd have seen that enemy craft

It struck me during *Deep Fighter* that I haven't had the experience of playing a game like this for years. One man, one fighter, a detailed storyline, some juicy full motion video and a solid, predictable enemy against which to pit your skills. After I finished with *Deep Fighter*, I really wanted to load up *Wing Commander*, because Criterion's underwater combat game really invokes that ancient, early-nineties style. Unfortunately, without anywhere near the same level of engagement.

Classy

The *Deep Fighters* are the last graduates from the last class of the last school of submarine warfare. Their planet is doomed. Apparently. The only hope lies in creating a huge spaceship to fly everyone off the planet to a less doomed one. The only problem with this otherwise beautiful dream is that the naughty little Goblins called the Shadowkin won't leave the *Deep Fighters* the hell alone. Why the Shadowkin don't need to escape is never explained. Presumably they're immune. Immune from doom. Anyway, plot oddness aside, it's the *Deep Fighters'* task to make everything better and hold off the

ONE FISH, TWO FISH...

...red fish blue fish. Or in this case yellowfish.

The primary source of food for the *Deep Fighters* and their nascent spaceship. In another setback for feminism, female yellowfish are easily controlled with the *Attractotron*, while male yellowfish must be herded and corralled. Yes, that's right. You are playing a fish husbandry game. *Deep Fish-Husbandry*. Be afraid...



enemy until the grand project is finished and they can all rocket off into space.

So you float around in an armed submarine, shooting things. This is an action game, but it's slow, predictable 'action'. I was sorely tempted to turn the game off fifteen minutes into the dullard early missions, which feature only sea spiders to kill and orange minerals to collect.

And it doesn't get any better. You just swim around, go and shoot things, and occasionally change ships. To other, even

more boring ships. Not even the prospect of new firepower can hold your interest. It's repetitive and too much time is wasted travelling between widely separated waypoints. Talk about lack of incentive; for God's sake, let's have more than a dot on a map as an objective.

Snooze

It's sad, because behind the boring missions, *Deep Fighter* is actually a reasonably well-designed game, with strong graphics and a clean interface that makes the piloting and navigation of the vessel quite enjoyable. Detailed seascapes with lots of flora and fauna lend a nice Jacques Costeau feeling to the game. The AI of the Shadowkin is decent, and even wingmen give you an occasional hand.

So it's just a damn shame that the action isn't up to scratch. *Deep Fighter* looks good, but it's nothing we haven't seen before, done better. *Deep Fighter* is like that boring guy who always turns up at parties, just wearing a good jacket and a new haircut. He may look schmick, but when he opens his mouth, he's still boring. So it is that boring gaming with good graphics is also boring. Fire up your 486 and rehash *Wing Commander* instead.

Christian Read

PCPP

OVERALL

Underwater?
Underwhelmed,
more like

60%

PACMAN ADVENTURES IN TIME

Originally inspired by a pizza with one slice removed

DETAILS

GENRE

Pacman

MULTIPLAYER

Yes!

DEVELOPER

Minds Eye

PUBLISHER

Hasbro

DISTRIBUTOR

Hasbro

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

TBA

NEED

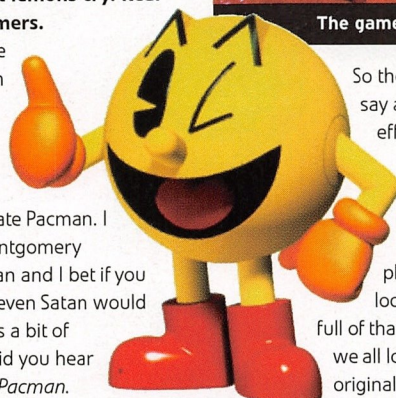
PII-233 32Mb RAM

WANT

PIII-500, 64Mb RAM, 3D Videocard

There's nothing wrong with being bitter - especially if you review games for a living. If you think otherwise, then I implore you to please recall your opinions of bitterness next time you're laughing at a doctored photo of Stevie 'Killcreek' Case, a hateful tirade against Sierra adventure games or an essay about how some psycho wants to 'gut Sid Meier'. Because the people who did those things were probably bitter enough to make most lemons cry. Real gamers are bitter gamers.

But, of course, there is a line to be drawn on gaming bitterness and the extent it can go to - and that line, my friends, is called Pacman. No one can hate Pacman. I can't hate Pacman, Montgomery Burns can't hate Pacman and I bet if you contacted him in Hell, even Satan would bashfully admit he likes a bit of yellow pill munchin'. Did you hear that? *Even Satan likes Pacman.*



The gameplay remains the same, though the graphics have been tarted up

So then, what should we say about Hasbro's latest effort to revive our little lemon hero into the realms of 3D acceleration? We should say this: that it plays the same, that it looks excellent, that it's full of that great nostalgia that we all love (it even has the original music) and that it's a

premium game as long as it's taken for what it is - which is nothing more than a bit of nostalgia in a shiny 3D coat. It's not groundbreaking or hyper-intelligent, but it is fun. And isn't that all that matters? Pacman rocks.

Daniel Staines

PCPP

OVERALL

Pacman returns - and we're all better people for it

70%

CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 00/01

Real football has only one real simulation

DETAILS

GENRE

Management

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (TCP/IP)

DEVELOPER

Sports Interactive

PUBLISHER

Eidos

DISTRIBUTOR

Ozisoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

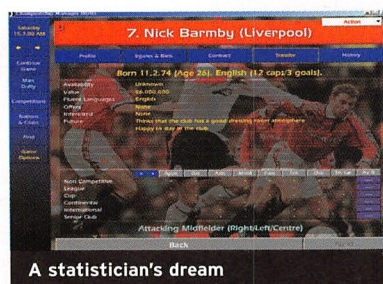
G

NEED

P-133, 16Mb RAM, 1Mb 2D Videocard

WANT

PIII-450, 128Mb RAM, Ethernet card, plenty of free HDD space



A statistician's dream

Let's keep this nice and simple, shall we? If you're reading this I'm already preaching to the converted. You either love football and thus love the CM series, or you don't love football and thus you are a very silly person. So go away, silly people, and let's get to it.

CM 00/01 isn't an all new, all singing, all dancing evolution of the series - that'll be CM4, when it comes. 00/01 is a data and league update with a surprising amount of gameplay enhancements thrown in, including popping the Australian league - the NSL - in for good measure. Hoorah for the Collyer brothers!



CM's realism is unparalleled

And hoorah for the (unpaid, I think) Australian league researchers who have done an Alan Hunter style 'World Class' job in getting the stats near spot on for the local players, too.

CM has always premiered tactics and mind boggling, in-depth statistics over glitzy pretty interfaces and match representations, and nothing has changed in this respect. The interface has been slightly tweaked and prettified, but there's also been a heap of statistical information added as well as much more in-depth information available from your team of helpers. For the first time your backroom staff will, when asked, analyse

players from your squad or youth team and give you an opinion on them, scouts give an opinion on prospective signings, and transfer deals are labyrinthine and Machiavellian as real life too. To add even more of a 'real life' flavour to the game, you'll sometimes find out about your players nightclub 'adventures' or dissatisfaction with the club through the tabloids too, which is always nice.

The statistical analysis available has been enhanced with more magnificent detail to wade through in your efforts to take Liverpool or Northern Spirit (or an unimportant team) to glory. Simply, it's the best stats based football simulation by a long, long way, and though 00/01 is really only an update with some enhancements, it's still the latest and best in the long line of the magnificent CM series. Nuff said. Go get it now.

Gareth Jones



PCPP

OVERALL

It's really football. Magnificent, again

90%

HEROES CHRONICLES

Popular strategy series now in new, bite-size form

DETAILS

GENRE

Strategy

MULTIPLAYER

TBA

DEVELOPER

New World Computing

PUBLISHER

3DO

DISTRIBUTOR

Jack of all Games

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

P-133, 32MB RAM,
230MB HDD, 4xCD

WANT

PII, 64MB RAM,
8xCD

ONLINE

www.mightandmagic.com
Oh, look, you
already know it



www.3do.com/products/pc/legends

3DO's been working on an online game based in the Might & Magic universe. Although there isn't much up yet (namely character descriptions), there will be soon so keep an eye on this!



PCPP

OVERALL

A good series but
perhaps a little
overpriced

68%



Small caption; small game

The citizens of Erathia must read the Book of Revelation as though it was a bedtime story. With many of the Might & Magic and Heroes of Might & Magic (HoMM) campaigns taking place on their world, the local inhabitants would've seen their fair share of miracles and mayhem and are now probably developing a minor persecution complex.

Nevertheless, 3DO has released more titles based on the HoMM theme - the Heroes Chronicles. Warlords of the Wasteland is the first in the series, which sees a young barbarian, Tarnum, take on the might of the Wizards to reclaim his rightful throne. All is well, until he dies and is rejected by the heavens. From there, Tarnum becomes immortal and saves the world in each of the other three Heroes Chronicles titles: Clash of the Dragons, Master of the Elements and Conquest of the Underworld.

There is no danger of the individual Heroes Chronicles titles being too similar - Tarnum changes character class quite regularly. While initially a barbarian, he soon becomes a wizard, a ranger and a knight in each successive story. The types of creatures

he hangs out with change as well; it was a bit of a shock to start up the first game and find Tarnum hiring goblins and ogres instead of the usual Knights-of-the-Round-Table fare. Building styles, character abilities and environments shift accordingly.

Melee magic

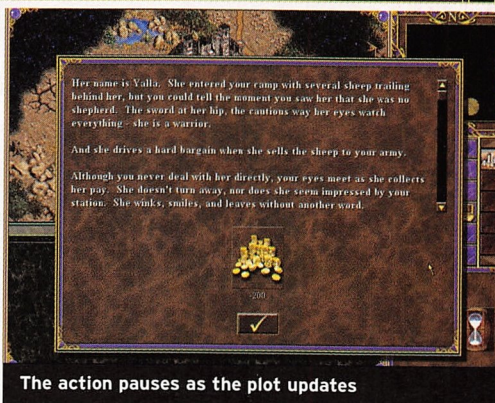
Like the HoMM series, the Heroes Chronicles is a strong mix of turn-based strategy and roleplaying. Heroes are used to explore the map and recover resources to build your armies. At the same time, it is also important to gain experience: a high-level hero can provide his troops with a lot of combat bonuses. The most memorable feature in HoMM and Heroes Chronicles, however, is witnessed



HoMM3 addicts will note the Fortress looks identical

NEW CHAPTERS

It looks as though the Heroes Chronicles series is going to get much bigger. Already, two extra games are available as an offer from 3DO - a factor that may influence any game-buying decision. If you own at least two of the existing Heroes Chronicles titles, then The World Tree can be downloaded free from their website. Similarly, The Fiery Moon is available for those with at least three titles (until January 15, 2001). If the number of titles keeps growing, Tarnum is going to be a very busy boy.



The action pauses as the plot updates



War. War never changes... etc

during melee when the game flicks to a combat screen - it's nice to see your underlings fight tooth and nail for your survival.

With large amounts of exploration, close-up combat, hero development and an emphasised storyline, Heroes Chronicles is very enjoyable and addictive. There is, however, some contention about value for money. At approximately \$49.95 each, these four games can prove to be a little expensive - each sequel has eight scenarios and, as a consequence, takes a small time to play (approximately 20-25 hours gameplay each). For the beginner, these games are ideal. HoMM fans, however, might want to wait until the price comes down a little.

Ryan Hovingh

LINKS 2001

Now even prettier

DETAILS

GENRE

Golf Sim

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Microsoft

PUBLISHER

Microsoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Microsoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

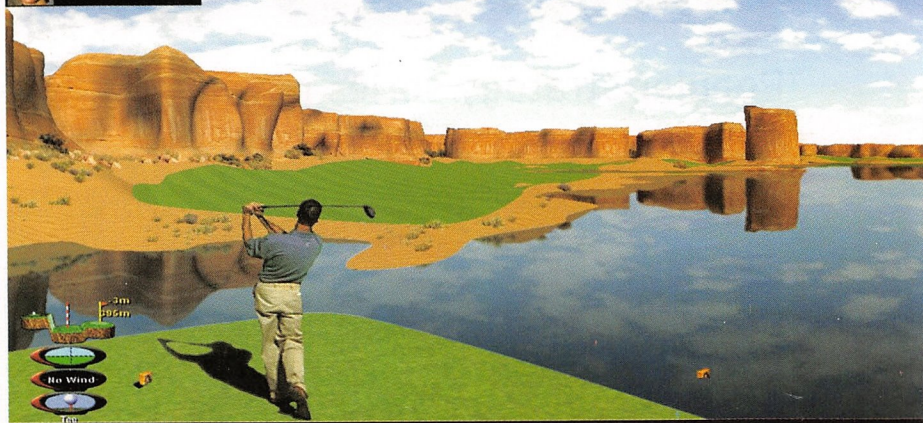
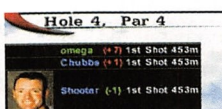
PII-266, 64Mb RAM, 250Mb HDD

WANT

PII-350, 128Mb RAM, 8Mb 3D Videocard

Firing up Microsoft's latest edition of the Links franchise, the player is treated to one of the most god-awful introductory sequences of all time. This ill-conceived amalgam of death metal riffs and golf footage instantly revokes any desire to play the game. Fortunately, resolutely plodding onward through the sterile interface to the meat of the game itself proves far more rewarding than initially anticipated.

Links 2001 dramatically improves on its predecessors in several ways: the most noticeable being in the graphics department. The courses now look more realistic than ever, and the player models look less like cardboard cutouts than they used to. On the whole the models and the backgrounds over which they're superimposed have far more depth and definition in screenshots than they do when actually playing the game. Obviously, this will be a source of disappointment to many players, but Links 2001 still retains many of its most appealing aspects. A new Virtual Pool-esque, mouse sliding system for hitting the ball also partly



Definitely one of the more unusual golf courses around

alleviates the sterility associated with the traditional button-clicking method.

One of the most publicised new features of Links 2001 is the Arnold Palmer Course Designer. This is the same tool the development team used to model the game's six courses, and it allows the player to attempt to create their own. Unfortunately, due to the Designer's complexity, creating an entire course takes in the order of several months. Lucky, then, that custom made courses are available for

download from the game web site. Overall, Links 2001 is a solid golf sim that is superior to the competition, but it's still nowhere near as enjoyable as an afternoon spent on the back nine down at the local course.

Brett Robinson

PCPP

OVERALL

Best saved for rainy days when real golf is out of the question

82%

TIGER WOODS USA TOUR

Daniel has a cat called Tiger

DETAILS

GENRE

Sport

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Headgate Studios

PUBLISHER

EA Sports

DISTRIBUTOR

Electronic Arts

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

P-200, 32Mb RAM

WANT

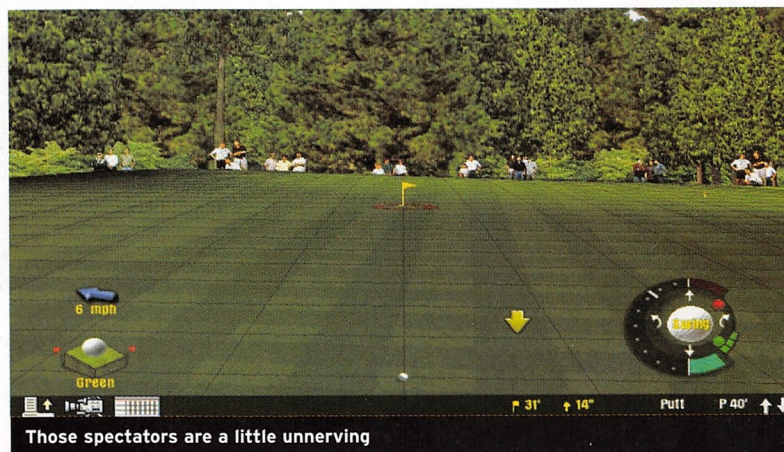
PII-400, 64Mb RAM, 3D Videocard

Look, David, Davie (Nnngh - Ed), Mr. Editor... buddy. I'm sorry, okay? I'm sorry I got so drunk at the PCPP Christmas party. I'm sorry I threatened to "cut you up real bad" for giving me King of Dragon Pass to review. I'm sorry I behaved like a drunken member of Young Labor. I'm really, really sorry.

But giving me a golfing game in retaliation? That's just low. I am sure that there's somebody out there who really likes golfing games and I am also sure that I hope to never meet them.

I mean, really, how could you like them? Their gameplay mechanics essentially haven't changed any since Leaderboard on the Commodore 64 and, technical improvements aside, each new title seems much the same as all the others that preceded it. And by 'much the same', I of course mean 'tediously tedious' - because that's what golfing games are.

Click when bar gets to dot, click when bar gets to other dot, swing shot, hear



Those spectators are a little unnerving

commentator abuse you for being so bad at golf. Repeat ad nauseam. lck.

On the upside though, is the packaging. The box is particularly amusing as on first glance it appears that it has a picture of Mr Woods attacking a photographer with his club - perhaps mistaking him for paparazzi or one of his fans. That's kinda funny... but not enough to justify buying the game.

If you like to play golfing games, then take a look at the screenshot on this page

to decide whether or not the pretty visuals warrant you shelling out your hard earned cash for Tiger Woods USA Tour. If not, then you had better not bother because it's all pretty much the same thing.

Daniel Staines

PCPP

OVERALL

For golfers and Tiger fans only

59%

COMBAT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 2

After MS Flight Sim comes another one - this time with guns

DETAILS

GENRE

Flight Sim

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-8)

DEVELOPER

Microsoft

PUBLISHER

Microsoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Microsoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

PII-266, 32Mb RAM,
400Mb HD

WANT

PIII, 64Mb RAM

ONLINE

www.microsoft.com/games/combatfs2
Guess what this is



www.combatfs.com
And - hey - have another guess



PCPP

OVERALL

Difficult to fault as a flight sim, but it doesn't deliver the naval air action we've been waiting for

83%



The virtual cockpit is exceptionally detailed

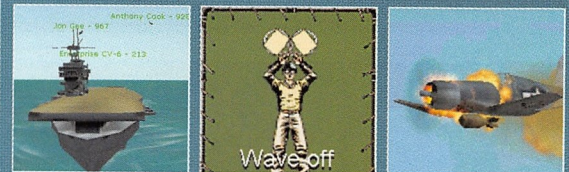
After a spate of European based WWII sims, Microsoft has moved the action back to paradise in **Combat Flight Simulator 2 - WWII Pacific Theatre**. The result is a bit of a mixed bag, but those with a taste for floating runways and seaweed can safely break out the Mae Wests and report to Pearl!

Covering the Pacific War from 1942-44, CFS2 offers 7 player-flyable aircraft, a dozen historical missions and a single campaign each for the US and Japanese sides. Veterans of CFS will be pleased to know that the campaign structure shows marked improvement, incorporating both career advancement and good quality cartoon style cutscenes. The long-awaited Mission Editor is also included, although would-be designers are warned that it's pretty cumbersome and virtually unsupported by the manual.

The aircraft graphics are also superb, supported by flight models that seem genuinely unique to each aircraft type, and the representation of damage is absolutely first class. Smoke, debris and changed flight characteristics are all good combat indicators for experienced players, as are sound effects that equal anything else on the shelves.

Unfortunately, the sense of location engendered by great looks and sound isn't really reflected in the nature of the missions themselves. CFS2 dogfighting is as good as it gets, but the game seems to miss the mark in the specifics of sea-based airpower. Carrier operations, ground support and anti-shiping actions should be the basis of this game, yet each is paid scant attention in the historical missions - unbelievably, torpedo bombers are not available at all! Whilst ships are well rendered, no deck crews are present, and the terrain modelling just isn't

HOLD STILL!



Carrier landings are tricky to master, despite the help of the LSO (Landing Signals Officer). He's moving, the ship is moving, you're moving, fuel is low and the engine is on fire! Add a crosswind and failing light, and things just got a lot more exciting.

CFS2 looks fantastic, despite the fact that blue sea and green islands get a little repetitive after a while (I know it's set in the Pacific!).

up to the standard needed for ground targets. This aspect of the game isn't improved by the limited multiplay options, although MS Zone Deathmatch and Head-Head play is fast, enjoyable and stable.

The solid, highly configurable interface is partly spoiled by a few surprising lapses, such as faulty mission summaries and incorrect colour coding on the planning map, but players will have no trouble getting into the air. While the manual is disappointing (big, but lacking some basic instructions and necessary diagrams), the training missions are straightforward and well scripted, and full online help is provided. This is an excellent entry level flight sim at the lower difficulty settings, while still posing some genuine challenges at the higher end of the scale - particularly when working from carriers.

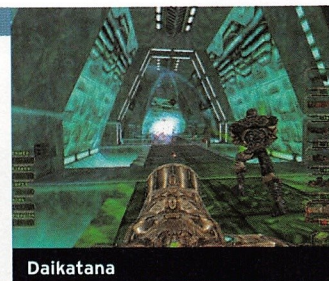
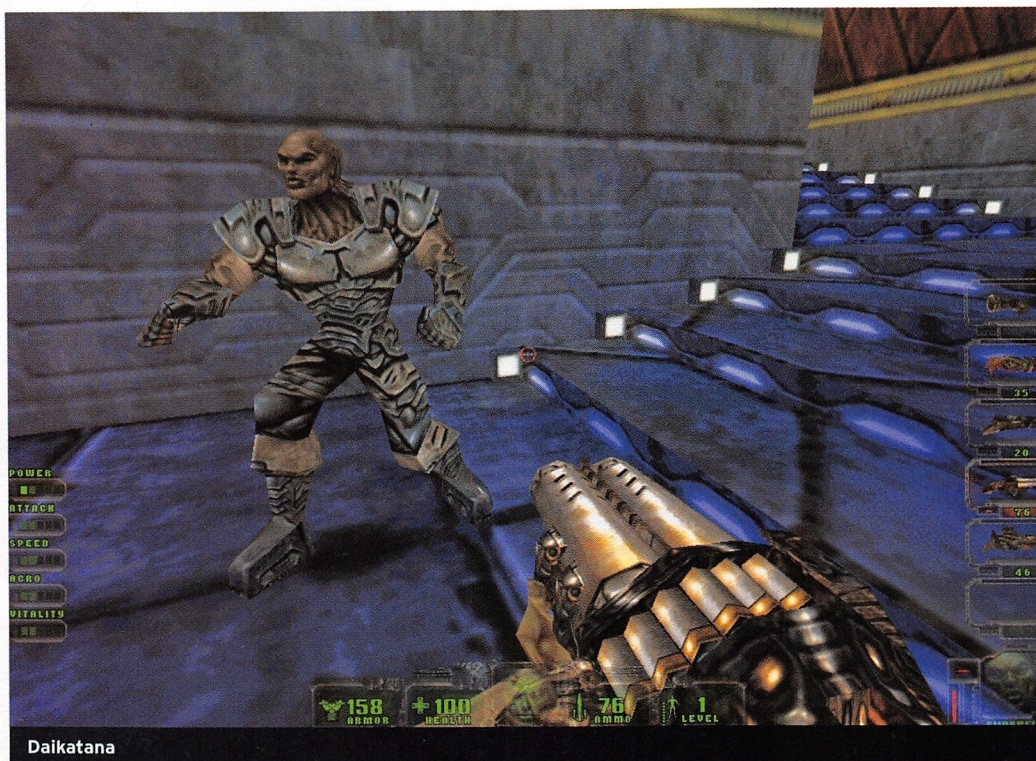
On balance, Combat Flight Sim 2 is more an enhancement to the existing formula than a major step forward in the genre, neither fully capturing the essence of action in the Pacific (you just can't do that without torpedo runs guys!) or offering enough in the way of improvements to stand alone. Still a great buy if flying is more important to you than sailing!

Major Des McNicholas

SCORE LIST

The past year in gaming. This month we highlight the worst games...

GAME NAME SCORE # ISSUE



DICK JOHNSON

DEVELOPER Torus

PUBLISHER Home Software

DISTRIBUTOR Home Software

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"To release a product in 2000 which would be more at home back in 1995, then charge ninety dollars for it, is an insult to the gamers of today. DJV8C doesn't exactly stand tall for the Australian game developing community, and in what would seem a great title in name, is left severely wanting in all areas. A real missed opportunity."

45% in PCPP #46

12 O'Clock High	68	#46
AOE2: The Conquerors	90	#54
Age of Wonders	84	#46
Akuma: Demonspawn	50	#47
Alien Nations	75	#52
All Star Tennis 2000	62	#54
Allegiance	81	#50
Arcatera	49	#53
Army Men Air Tactics	65	#50
Army Men In Space	66	#48
Asheran's Call	88	#50
Atlantis II	78	#50
Baldur's Gate 2	93	#53
Battlecruiser 3000	72	#50
Battlezone 2	85	#48
Beetle Crazy Cup	74	#49
Buck and Bass 2	11	#56
Carmageddon 2000	40	#56
Century of Warfare	85	#54
Codename: Eagle	64	#46
Combat Mission	90	#56
Cricket 2000	70	#51
Crimson Skies	89	#55
Croc 2	78	#48
Crusaders of Might & Magic	75	#50
Cultures	81	#56
Dark Reign 2	89	#51
Delta Force 2	78	#46
Descent 3: Mercenaries	65	#47
Deus Ex	98	#51

AIRPORT INC.

DEVELOPER Krisalis

PUBLISHER Take Two

DISTRIBUTOR Jack of All Games

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"Airport Inc features an ugly and confusing interface, with a noticeable lack of game options for the player to tinker around with. It also lacks any agreeable style or personality. Combine this with a rather confusing learning curve and a lack of adequate support literature, and you've got one messy airport simulator."

42% in PCPP #48

Dirt Track Racing	90	#55
Dogs of War	72	#51
Dracula	58	#47
Earth 2150	91	#53
Enemy Engaged	91	#50
Escape from Monkey Island	90	#55
Europe in Flames	81	#54
Evolva	71	#50
F/A 18 Hornet	91	#47
FIFA 2000	88	#45
Final Fantasy VIII	77	#47
Flying Heroes	76	#51

Force Commander	58	#49
Gorky 17	65	#47
Grand Prix 3	88	#53
Grand Prix World	83	#49
Ground Control	90	#52
Gulf War: Desert Hammer	55	#45
Gunship!	89	#50
Half-Life: Counter-Strike	91	#55
Half-Life: Opposing Force	90	#45
Heavy Metal: FAKK 2	80	#54
Hitman	90	#56
HOMM III: Armageddon's Blade	70	#45

DAIKATANA

DEVELOPER Ion Storm

PUBLISHER Eidos

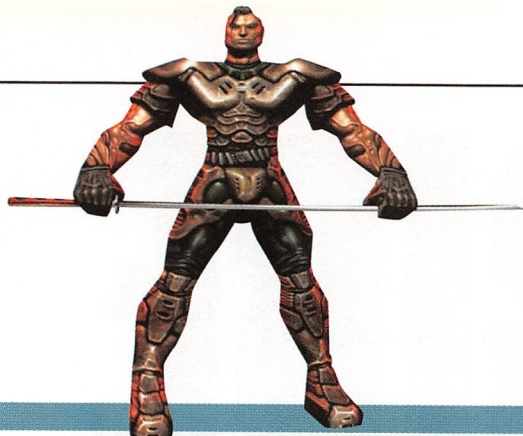
DISTRIBUTOR Ozisoft

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"After more than three years in construction, and with Romero's track record, it would be fair to expect Daikatana to have some excellent maps and a well-developed single player storyline to make full use of its large gameworld. However, neither is really true, leaving Daikatana to feel a bit dated."

64% in PCPP #52

H & D: Fight for Freedom	45	#46
Homeworld: Cataclysm	90	#55
Icewind Dale	80	#52
Imperium Galactica 2	92	#46
In Cold Blood	80	#56
Indy Jones & Infernal Machine	69	#45
Infestation	68	#56
Insane	87	#56
Interstate '82	60	#47
Invictus	51	#48
KA-52 Alligator	65	#48
Klingon Academy	83	#53
Kiss: Psycho Circus	64	#54
Lemmings Revolution	70	#51
Madden 2001	78	#56
Majesty	79	#49
Martian Gothic	57	#50
Maximum Flight	78	#52
MDK 2	84	#52
Mech Collection	63	#54
Messiah	89	#48
Metal Fatigue	76	#53
Midtown Madness 2	82	#54
Might & Magic VIII	55	#49
Millennium Racer	70	#50
Motocross Madness 2	85	#51
MTV Skateboarding	65	#55
NBA Inside Drive 2000	68	#46
NBA Live 2000	90	#45
Need For Speed: Porsche 2000	75	#52
Nerf Arena	70	#46



Gold Award
90-94

Platinum Award
95-100

KODP

DEVELOPER A Sharp

PUBLISHER A Sharp

DISTRIBUTOR TBA

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"KoDP does not have an interesting, intense story. Instead, it has a series of completely unconnected, tedious events which seemingly have no end purpose other than more of the same. This really takes away all incentive to play the game at all, leaving it seeming rather pointless and, most of all, mundane."

31% in PCPP #52

NHL Championship 2000	78	#46
Nocturne	79	#46
No One Lives Forever	90	#56
Nox	83	#48
Pandora's Box	68	#47
Panzer Elite	85	#46
Pharaoh	88	#45
Phoenix	64	#46
Pizza Syndicate	52	#54
Professional Bull Rider 2	36	#56
Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey	88	#47
Puma Street Soccer	75	#46
Rally Championship 2000	88	#45
Rayman 2	89	#45
Reach for the Stars	79	#54
Red Alert 2	91	#56

M25 RACER

DEVELOPER Davilex

PUBLISHER Activision

DISTRIBUTOR Activision

WHAT WE SAID THEN

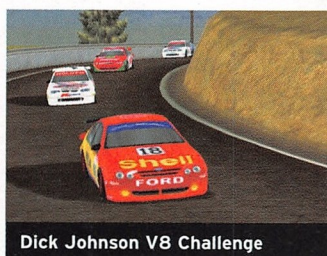
"Every now and then a game comes along that defies all expectations and completely redefines the term 'crap game!' In fantastically underwhelming style, M25 Racer fits the bill perfectly. It's an extremely poor effort, no matter which way you look at it. Give this one a wide berth."

25% in PCPP #45

Revenant	82	#45
Rising Sun	82	#48
Rollcage II	80	#50
R'coaster Tyc: Added Attractions	81	#45
Rugby 2001	80	#55
Rune	80	#56



South Park Rally



Dick Johnson V8 Challenge

Sacrifice	90	#55
Septerra Core	84	#47
Shadow Watch	65	#49
Shogun: Total War	92	#50
Starship Troopers	79	#56
Star Trek: Elite Force	86	#55
Star Trek: New Worlds	35	#56
Submarine Titans	70	#56
The Sims	90	#47
The Sims Livin' Large	88	#54
Slave Zero	55	#47

NASCAR REVOLUTION

DEVELOPER EA Sports

PUBLISHER EA Sports

DISTRIBUTOR Electronic Arts

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"Nascar Revolution is a game for the casual racer who has no concept of quality - the glitzy front end is its most redeeming feature. There is no true sense of speed in Nascar Revolution, and it quickly becomes apparent that the most appealing of its options is the exit button down the bottom."

35% in PCPP #48

Soldier of Fortune	86	#49
Soulbringer	80	#51
Spec Ops 2	60	#46
Speed Demons	55	#47
Starlancer	93	#49
Star Trek: Armada	56	#49
Star Trek: Hidden Evil	69	#46
Super Hornet	63	#54

SOUTH PARK RALLY

DEVELOPER Tantalus

PUBLISHER Acclaim

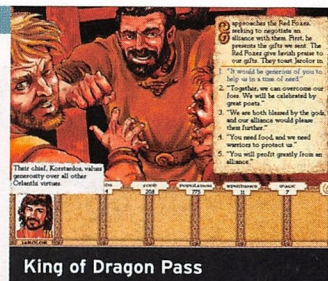
DISTRIBUTOR Activision

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"This is Mario Kart for PC except that everything is disgusting, South Park style, and crap. The handling of the cars is unbelievably poor, as are the graphics. Let's get this straight: South Park is only good as a weekly distraction on telly."

41% in PCPP #47

Swat 3	90	#46
Sydney 2000	85	#52
Tachyon	84	#54
Theandor	69	#54
Theocracy	76	#49
The Wheel of Time	84	#45
Thief Gold	96	#45
Thief II: The Metal Age	95	#49
Theme Park World	80	#45
Tiger Woods 2000	84	#49
Tomb Raider Chronicles	71	#56
UEFA Manager	79	#51
Ultima Online	68	#48
Ultima IX: Ascension	70	#45



King of Dragon Pass

WACKY RACES

DEVELOPER Infogrames

PUBLISHER Infogrames

DISTRIBUTOR Ozisoft

WHAT WE SAID THEN

"The tracks are very dull and seem to have been deliberately designed to be as annoying as possible. When you combine that with the great difficulty in getting powerups and the very sloppy car handling, you get a game which is more frustrating than fun to play."

32% in PCPP #54

Ultra Pinball Thrillride	71	#56
Unreal Tournament	94	#45
Urban Chaos	85	#46
Vampire: The Masquerade	82	#52
V-Rally 2	81	#55
Wartorn	78	#53
Warlords Battlecry	62	#54
Wild Wild West	65	#51
World Manager	34	#48

SCORE LIST QUIZ!

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All you have to do is tell us which game this image comes from. (Clue: it's a small section of a screenshot published in PCPP.) Send to the usual competitions address, marking your envelope to "The Worst Games" and writing your answer on the back. Don't forget to tell us which game of the eight featured on these pages you would like to win. Winners notified in PCPP#59.



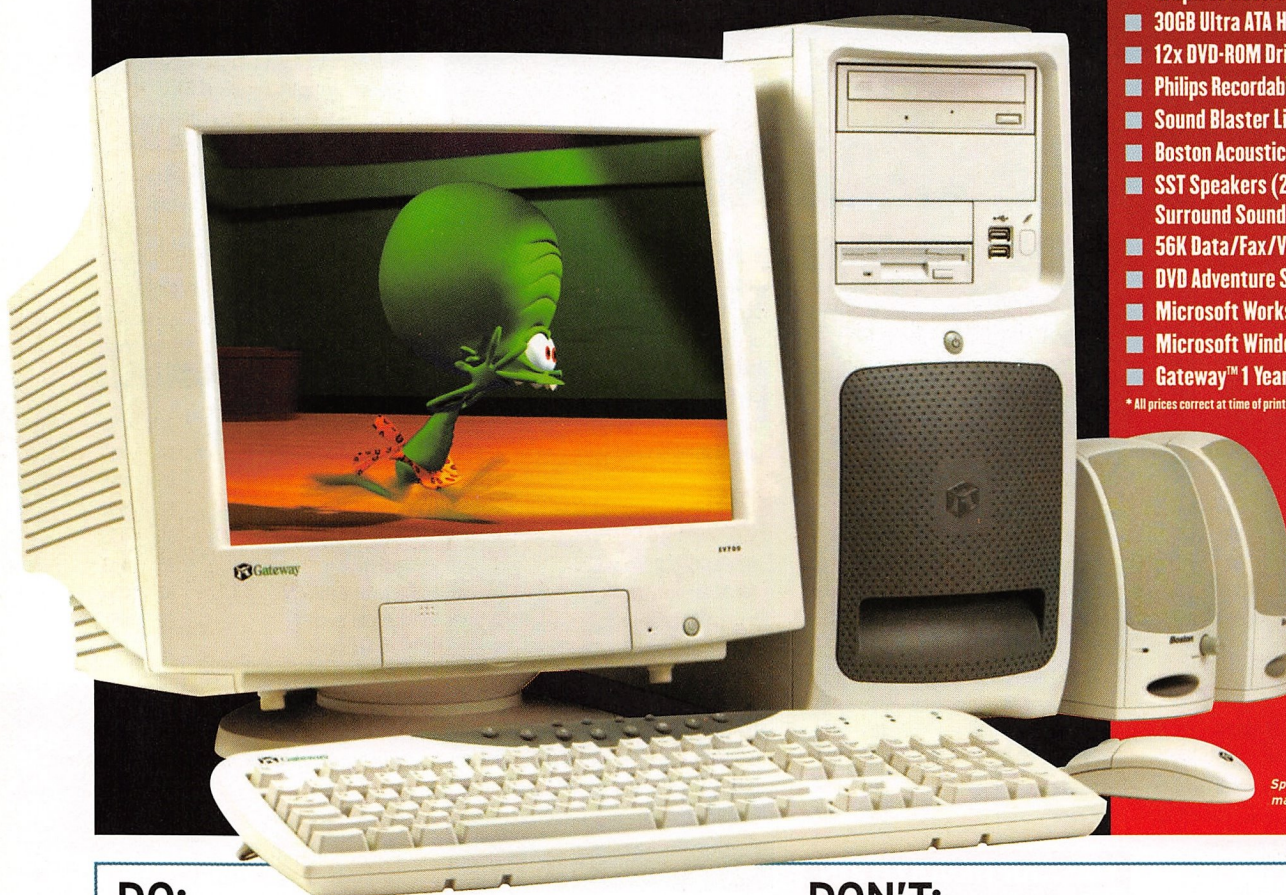
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Tech

THE SILICON STATE OF THE ART



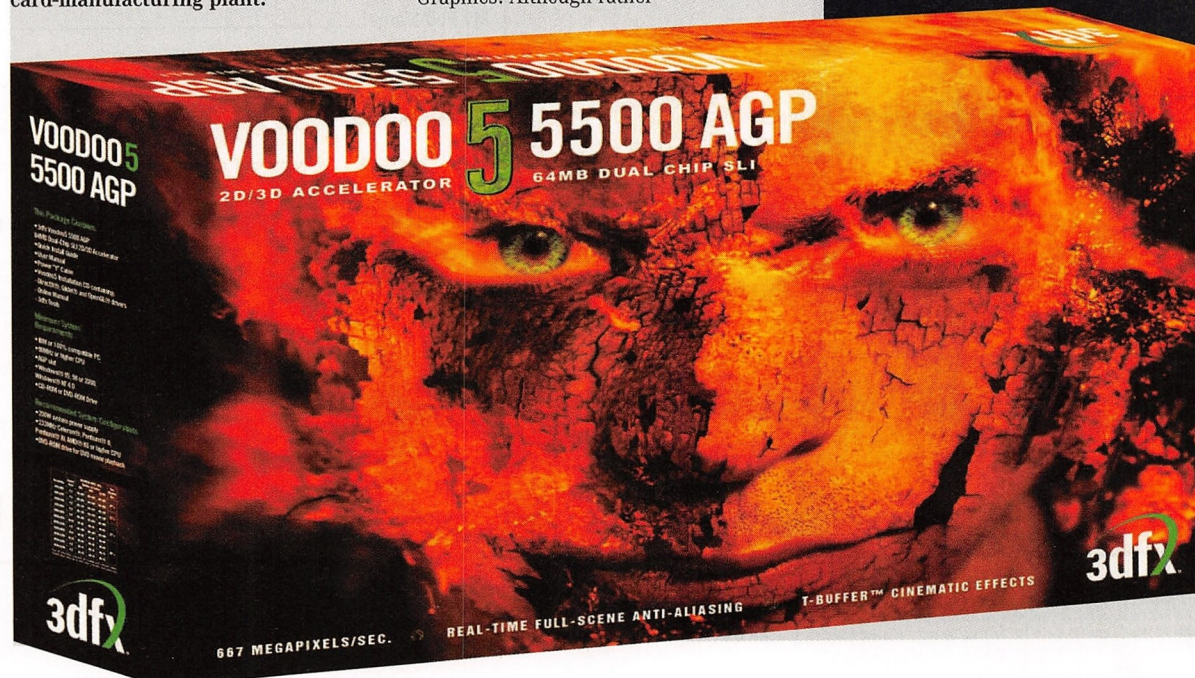
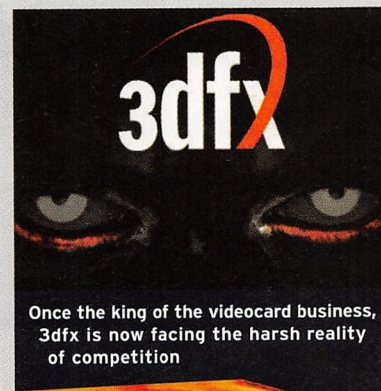
One of the most exciting developments in the IT industry is the emerging Bluetooth standard. Anyone who has struggled to connect different devices using cables and connectors will appreciate the convenience of wireless connectivity. Originally conceived by Ericsson, Bluetooth is essentially a cable replacement technology. It uses short-range radio waves to link electronic equipment together without using wires. The Bluetooth standard - which automatically recognises any other Bluetooth devices within 10 metres and installs a network - will be a leap forward for LAN gamers. Like USB and infrared connectivity, Bluetooth has had a slow initial uptake. Devices based on the specification were originally due in early 2000. However, pundits don't expect the technology to show up in volume until the end of this year. For now, though, the potential is huge. hughns@next.com.au

3dfx In Trouble?

COMPANY PULLS OUT OF MANUFACTURING

3dfx announced recently that it is canning its videocard manufacturing business, and is returning to its roots as a chips-only manufacturer. Instead of producing entire graphics solutions, the beleaguered company will be licensing its technology and selling chips to separate board vendors, a strategy employed by arch-rival Nvidia. In doing so, the company plans to shutdown its Juarez, Mexico, card-manufacturing plant.

So what happened? At the beginning of the 3D revolution, 3dfx was kicking out the best 3D acceleration solutions. ATI had its Rage line, S3 its Virge, but neither made inroads like the original Voodoo Graphics. The Voodoo1 was the board for GLQuake and Psygnosis' Formula 1. It gave players awesome 3D, even on a low-end Pentium. 3dfx's hegemony continued through the release of Quake 2, with the Voodoo2, which was three times as quick as the Voodoo Graphics. Although rather



AMD Mustang Dropped?

PROCESSORS ON THE HORIZON

For the time being, AMD has decided to cancel development and production of the Mustang (Athlon Ultra) processor. The Mustang was designed for the server market and slated as a competitor for the Intel Xeon. Supposedly, the Mustang was going to feature up to 2Mb of on-die cache. This is a highly lucrative market, as companies are prepared to pay large amounts for high-specification CPUs. AMD seems confident that the forthcoming Palomino processor, coupled with the SMP capable AMD-760MP chipset, will provide sufficient power for prospective customers.

Palomino and Morgan are the next-generation Athlon derivatives, with different amounts of on-chip cache and optimised for different markets. Morgan is the updated AMD Duron, whereas Palomino is intended for the performance desktop market,



which the current Athlon now occupies. Both chips will also feature some micro-architectural improvements (new branch tree predictor) to improve performance.

At the same time, AMD executives revealed that the company would introduce the 64-bit Clawhammer CPU in Q1 2002 for high-end desktop PCs and low-end servers. The Clawhammer is a totally next-generation product. Clawhammer will reportedly be manufactured using a 0.13-micron process, and compete with the Pentium 4. Meanwhile, AMD's SledgeHammer 64-bit CPU will be offered as a competitor in the server market for the Intel Itanium.



NVIDIA

inelegant, SLI Voodoo2 was the fastest graphics setup for almost a year and a half. Most importantly, the Voodoo2 was considerably faster than the Riva128 chipset from upstart Nvidia.

Playing catch-up

And then, the fall. In December 1998, 3dfx bought out STB Systems in a bid to gain a foothold in the board manufacturing business. At the time, it seemed a logical move - 3dfx would have direct control over the pricing, quality and specifications of the finished product. Instead, that move, combined with numerous production delays and supply problems, has removed the company from its once-dominant position in the industry. After a series of disappointing quarters, the release of lacklustre boards and an unsuccessful foray into TV tuner products, the original chip giant has shrunk its market and wound up playing catch-up to its increasingly aggressive competitors.

Meanwhile, Nvidia has capitalised on 3dfx's struggle to innovate, releasing a series of successful products in quick succession. The TNT brought 32-bit colour and large texture buffers to the table, and the GeForce was the first card

to integrate a GPU onto the graphics core. The GeForce 2 GTS continued in this tradition, bringing a second generation GPU, scorching performance and a new shading rasterizer to the market place.

Cancellation

We suspect 3dfx's move away from video boards is a sensible move - not only will it allow 3dfx to concentrate on kick-arse 3D chips, but it will also provide more flexibility and, hopefully, reduce prices. No doubt 3dfx wants to return to the halcyon days of the Voodoo Graphics and the Voodoo2, when it dominated the graphics market.

Gamers may be disappointed to learn that 3dfx has cancelled the Voodoo5 6000, as one element in the attempt to restructure. It didn't come as much of a surprise to us. The product, which featured four VSA-100 processors, 128Mb of RAM and an external power supply, would have been far too expensive to interest the mass market. Instead, the company has licensed its four-way Scanline Interleave (SLI) technology, based on the Voodoo5 6000, exclusively to Quantum3D to be incorporated into its Alchemy family of PC-based systems for visual simulation and training applications. It will be marketed towards graphics professionals and game designers. Furthermore, early reports indicate the card won't be available through normal retail channels, although one online site is petitioning to have the Voodoo5 6000 released in small quantities to retail.

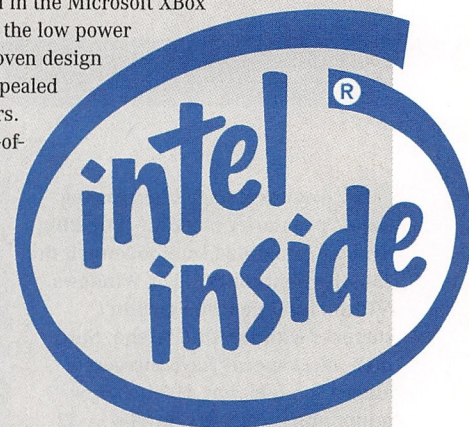
Tangy Tualatin

NEW PENTIUM 3 REVEALED

Intel's roadmap suggests that the latest iteration of the Pentium III, codename Tualatin, will make its first appearance later this year. The chip will clock in at 1.26 GHz, using the "B-Step" i815e platform. Tualatin will be manufactured on the new 0.13 micron process.

In contrast to early reports which stated that the desktop Tualatin would feature 512k of L2 cache at full-speed, it will, in fact, ship with a 256kb L2 cache, just as current Pentium III Coppermines do now. We can only speculate as to the motivations behind this change. With the appearance of the 1.3 GHz Pentium 4, it would be safe to assume that Intel wants the Pentium 4 to appeal to the mainstream market as a replacement for the aging P6. By maintaining the current 256 KB L2 cache size, and restricting Tualatin to a 133 MHz FSB using a modified i815 chipset, Intel is able to effectively limit the competitive pressure Tualatin can exert against the more profitable Pentium 4 platform.

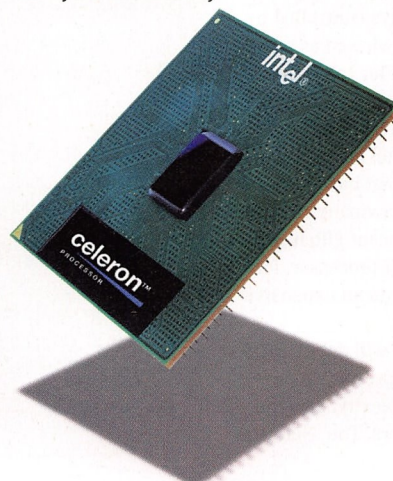
Industry reports suggest that the Tualatin processor at 733MHz will be used in the Microsoft Xbox console. Apparently, the low power consumption and proven design of the Pentium III appealed to Microsoft designers. In addition, the ease-of-production for Pentium III should ensure that no component shortages occur during the critical launch phase.



Celeron 766

SPEEDING UP

Intel has just released Celeron processors at 733 and 766MHz. Although based on a 'Coppermine' core, current Celerons, including the 733 and 766, still use a restrictive 66MHz FSB and a niggardly 128Kb of L2 cache. Intel plans to release a Celeron with a 100MHz FSB in Q2 of this year. Eventually.



INTEL

Without the usual press fanfare associated with an Intel launch, Intel Corp has announced the i815EP chipset. Aimed at game and graphic application developers, the i815EP has a disabled graphics core, for those who prefer using an external graphics card. The current i815e features a crap modified i740 graphics core built into the chipset - the i815EP removes this element in a boost to reduce costs for those who don't plan on using the integrated video controller. It retains all the other function of the i815e chipset, including PCI33 support, ATA/100, the enhanced I/O Controller hub at a 10% lower cost. At a marginally lower cost than the standard board, the Asus CUSL2-C is the first board to utilise this new chipset.

What's it Good 4?



by Hugh Norton-Smith

Four years ago, the growing popularity of 32-bit Operating Systems prompted Intel to launch the 150MHz Pentium Pro. For Windows NT, the Intel Pentium couldn't compete with the DEC Alpha. Since then, clockspeeds have increased almost ten-fold, but despite a few minor enhancements, Intel's IA-32 CPU architecture remains unchanged. The Pentium II, the Celeron, the Pentium III and even the newest Celerons all have their roots in this antediluvian architecture. This year, that's about to change as Intel launches the all-new Pentium 4 CPU (codenamed Willamette).

It's clear that Intel desperately needs the Pentium 4 to be a success. Indeed, AMD's impressive Athlon is making inroads into territory previously dominated by Intel. The new AMD-760 chipset is catapulting the Athlon into the server and high-end workstation market, a market segment always controlled by Intel. The Pentium 4 is viewed as an important step forward for Intel, as it moves beyond the limiting architecture introduced with 1996's Pentium Pro. With the Pentium 4, Intel hopes to solve some of the problems that have plagued the Pentium III as the company ramped up the clockspeed. A recent glitch with the 1.13GHz Pentium III processor, for example, forced Intel into an expensive recall of the faulty part.

The Pentium 4 chip will debut at 1.3, 1.4 and 1.5 GHz and represents a new level of processor complexity, sporting 42 million on-die transistors. The 'NetBurst'

Micro-Architecture (who wouldn't want a processor that implies speedy internet access?) featured inside the Pentium 4 comes with a surprising number of microprocessor innovations. It includes a 20 stage pipeline, improved dynamic execution, level 1 trace cache, double clocked ALUs, a quad-pumped 100MHz system bus, and SSE2. Each will be discussed in turn.

20 Stage Pipeline

At the heart of the Pentium 4 core is a 20-stage pipeline, described by Intel marketing as Hyper Pipelined Technology. In comparison, the P6 core featured a shorter, 10-stage pipeline. By introducing a longer pipeline, Intel will be able to aggressively push up processor clockspeeds. Right off the mark, the Pentium 4 will scale much better than the Pentium III, even without a die-shrink. The first Pentium 4s are built on the same die size as the Pentium III (0.18micron), but will launch at 1.5GHz, which is 366MHz faster than the 1.13GHz Pentium III. Although the Pentium 4 runs hot, it doesn't appear to have any of the heat-related problems that plagued the Pentium III 1.13GHz. Naturally, the deep pipelining will also give Intel increased headroom for future CPU releases. The P6 architecture started with the 150Mhz Pentium Pro, and eventually yielded the Pentium III 1.13GHz, which is an increase in clockspeed of almost 7.5 times. Applying this equation to the



The just-arrived Pentium 4 test unit - nice and clean before we got our hands on it

Pentium 4, it would be quite reasonable to expect a NetBurst-based CPU to reach a staggering 10.5GHz! For the major CPU manufacturers, raw clockspeed is all-important in sales. Most customers buy computers based on the clockspeed alone, ignoring other factors such as cache, internal architecture, etc. The AMD Athlon is already pushing the upper limits of the clockspeed envelope - the Pentium 4 represents an easy opportunity for Intel to leapfrog the Athlon in terms of raw clock-speed.

Although a longer pipeline will allow the Pentium 4 to hit new clockspeeds, it does introduce some serious disadvantages. The most obvious is size: the current Pentium 4 die is over twice as big as the current Pentium III Coppermine, a logical result of a 20-stage design. A hyperpipelined architecture also lowers the amount of Instructions Per Clock (IPC). The IPC of a processor defines its efficiency - a CPU with a low IPC gets less accomplished in a given amount of time than a CPU with a high IPC. Ergo, a 1GHz Pentium III would be, hypothetically, faster than a 1GHz Pentium 4. Obviously, the Pentium 4's inferior IPC will be largely offset by a significantly higher clockspeed. The IPC is largely determined by the Branch Tree Prediction of the CPU. Branch tree prediction is a widely used technique that attempts to increase the efficiency of the CPU pipeline. As the name suggests, Branch Tree Prediction predicts the possible outcomes of any calculation. If a processor makes an incorrect prediction (it happens frequently), calculation can be dramatically slowed down and a cycle missed. The processing cycle must start again at the beginning of the pipeline - the longer the pipeline, the further back in the process you have to start over at. Thus, a processor with a 10-stage pipeline has a lower penalty for a mis-predicted branch than a variant with a 20-stage pipeline. To counter the impact of a lengthy pipeline, the engineers at Intel have made some interesting design decisions.

To minimise any mis-predictions, the NetBurst architecture includes a powerful out-of-order speculative execution engine. Intel has, not surprisingly, dubbed this Advanced Dynamic Execution. By storing a maximum of 126 instructions in progress at any time (the Pentium III was limited to 42), and by implementing more advanced branch prediction algorithms, the Pentium 4 can dramatically lower the frequency of bad predictions. Intel claims to have reduced the number of missed branches by approximately 30% from the P6 core. An impressive claim.

Trace Cache

Another method of combating the problems associated with mid-predictions that could occur within the 20-stage pipeline of the Pentium 4 is by an Execution Trace Cache. This is a form of

level 1 instruction cache, with an interesting twist!

The trace cache stores up to 12,000 pre-decoded micro-operations and stores them efficiently for quick access. The trace cache arranges these micro-ops into branch associated lines - in contrast, while the Pentium III L1 cache will store information, it does not organize them in any way, so instructions cannot be loaded as quickly. In addition to the Level 1 trace cache, the Pentium 4 also includes 8k of conventional L1 cache. You may notice that this

is 8k less than the Pentium III's current 16kb L1 cache. The AMD Athlon, for comparison's sake, includes a huge 64k. According to Intel, the cache size doesn't matter as much as the clockspeed at which it operates. Essentially, Intel chip designers have gone for the 'bigger pipes, smaller buckets' design philosophy. In addition, a 16k cache would have added a large amount of transistors to an already crowded area, for a minimal performance award. It's worth noting that, like the Pentium III, all of the Level 1 cache, including the Trace Cache, will be duplicated in Level 2.

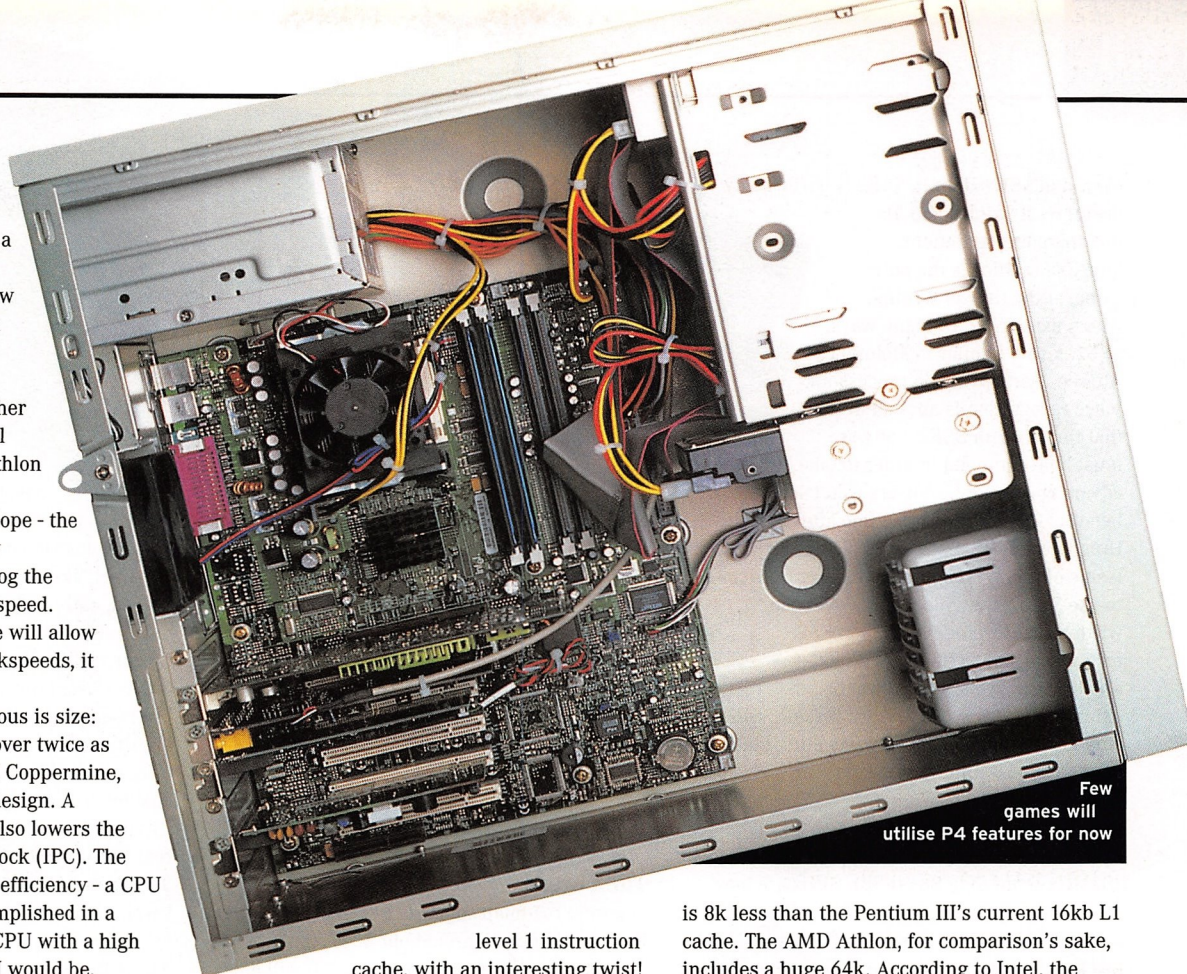
Like the Pentium III Coppermine, the Pentium 4 will also feature 256k of L2 ATC (Advanced Transfer Cache). ATC operates at the same speed as the processor, and is connected to the core by a 256-bit data path. At 1.4GHz, the Pentium 4 cache delivers an impressive 40Gb/s. Obviously this bandwidth will scale in relation to the clockspeed.

Revised ALUs

The Arithmetic Logic Units (ALUs) are the part of the processor used for integer operations. Integer, or whole number, operations are imperative to office and application performance. Intel has redesigned these units from scratch for the Pentium 4, calling them the 'Rapid Execution Engine'. With the Pentium 4, the ALUs operate at twice the speed of the rest of the processor. For example, in a 1.5GHz Pentium 4, the ALUs operate at 3GHz. Essentially, two integer operations can be carried out during a single core cycle. Intel asserts that the new ALUs result in higher execution speed and reduced internal latency.

SSE2

The Pentium 4 has 144 new multimedia instructions, called Streaming SIMD Extension 2 (SSE2). SIMD is an abbreviation of Single Instruction stream, Multiple Data streams. Like



Few games will utilise P4 features for now

MICROPROCESSOR HISTORY

1971	Intel 4004, Intel's first microprocessor
1972	Intel 8008
1974	Intel 8080
1978	Intel 8086 16 bit processor. Used in IBM's PC. The first x86 chip.
1979	Intel 8088 16-bit processor
1982	Intel 80286 16-bit processor
1984	IBM release 286 AT machine.
1985	Intel i386, Intel's first 32-bit processor
1987	Sun SPARC processor
1988	Intel i386DX processor
1989	Intel i486 processor
1990	IBM PowerPC RISC processor
1991	Intel i486DX
1992	DEC Alpha 64-bit processor
1993	Intel Pentium processor
1995	Sun UltraSPARC I 64-bit processor
1995	Intel PentiumPro processor, introduces P6 architecture
1997	Intel Pentium MMX processor
1997	Sun UltraSPARC II processor
1997	Intel Pentium II processor
1999	Intel Pentium III processor
1999	AMD Athlon processor
2000	Intel Pentium 4 processor

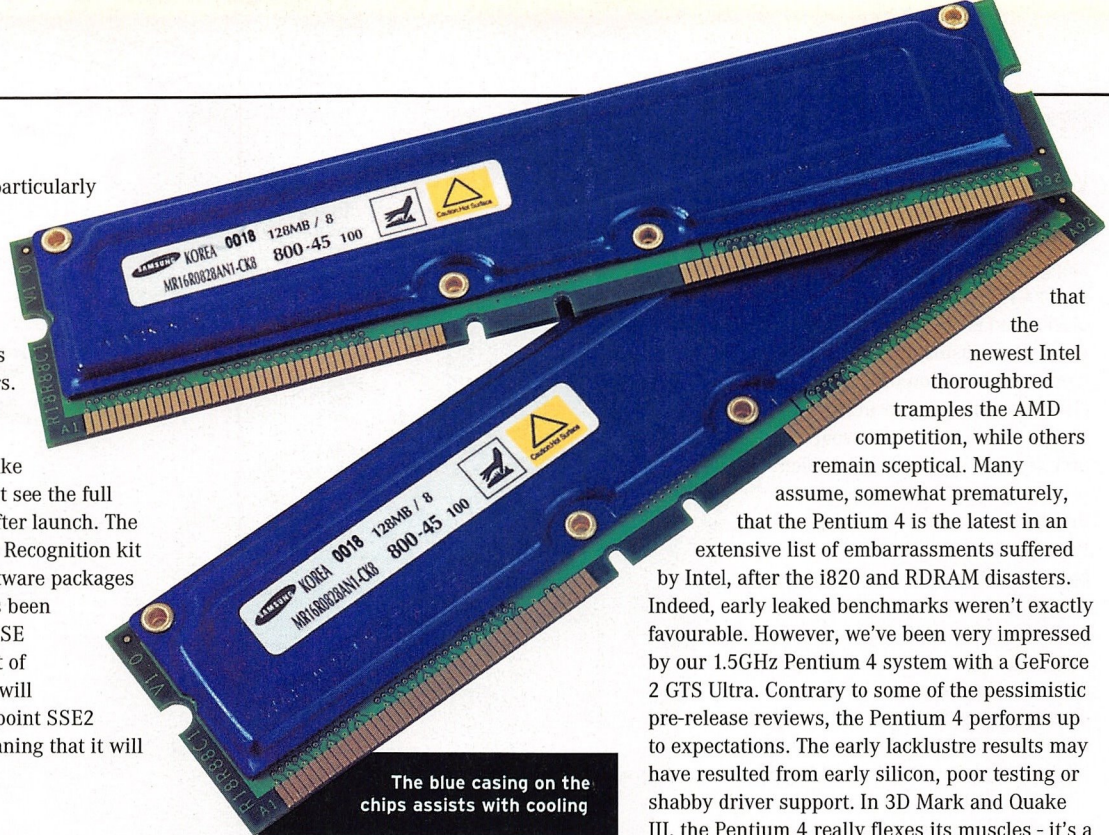
MMX and SSE before it, SSE2 is particularly useful in 3D games and for floating-point operations. Shiny's Sacrifice is the only game, at the time of writing, which uses SSE2. In many ways, SSE2 is very similar to Motorola's AltiVec, featured on G4 processors. Voice recognition is another area that thrives with SSE2. Software must be recompiled in order to take advantage of SSE2, so users won't see the full benefit of SSE2 until sometime after launch. The Dragon Naturally Speaking Voice Recognition kit is one of the first commercial software packages to use SSE2. A lot of software has been written that leverage MMX and SSE technology, so it's likely that a lot of applications in the coming years will extensively utilise SSE2. At this point SSE2 isn't a licensable technology, meaning that it will be restricted to Intel processors.

400MHz System Bus

Presently, the fastest Pentium III uses a meagre 133MHz Front Side Bus (FSB). CPUs are now rocketing past 1GHz, and the FSB is becoming a severe bottleneck in computer systems. AMD has rectified this problem to some extent, using a 266MHz EV6 FSB on the newest Athlon processors. Intel has leapfrogged AMD, by equipping the Pentium 4 with a 400MHz Front Side Bus. For the first time since the advent of the EV6 bus, Intel has the advantage over AMD in terms of available system bandwidth. Essentially, it's taken a conventional 100MHz bus, and quad-pumped it in order to quadruple the bandwidth. 400MHz on a 64-bit bus allows for a theoretical bandwidth of 3.2Gb/s, which is over three times what the Pentium III's 133MHz FSB can use. A 133MHz Pentium III FSB yields a maximum 1Gb/s of bandwidth. The 400MHz FSB provides a perfect interface for the i850 chipset, which uses a dual RDRAM setup. As it stands, the Pentium 4 will have bandwidth to burn. It's the first motherboard/CPU combination to take full advantage of the benefits of RDRAM. Games and all applications reliant on constant data streaming like MP3 encoding, voice recognition, and so on, need quite a bit of memory bandwidth.

I850 and RDRAM

For the moment, the Pentium 4 will require a motherboard featuring Intel's i850 chipset. The Pentium 4 uses the all-new Socket-W interface, with a massive 423 pins. The i850 chipset is similar to the i840 - it uses the same dual-channel RDRAM interface and Intel Hub Architecture. RDRAM prices still remain outrageously high when compared to DDR DRAM. In a bid to bolster sales, Intel is bundling some introductory Pentium 4 units with a niggardly 64Mb of PC-800 RDRAM. At a minimum, you will need to buy another 64Mb PC-800 RIMM, as the dual channel system requires memory modules in pairs. 128Mb RAM, however, is unlikely to do justice to a system of this calibre.



The Future

The Intel roadmap suggests a steady ramp-up in Pentium 4 speeds throughout 2001. The move to a .13 Micron process (currently at .18) will allow the Pentium 4 to cruise past the 2GHz mark. In 2002, the Pentium 4 is expected to hit at least 3GHz. During the second quarter of 2001, Intel will introduce the Tehama-E (DDR/DRAM) and Brookdale (DDR/SDRAM) chipsets for the Pentium 4. This is the same time frame in which Intel expects the Pentium 4 to cross over to the mainstream market. Intel is finally bowing to industry pressure and moving towards cost-effective SDR and DDR Pentium 4 chipsets. If RDRAM is the only standard available for the Pentium 4, then the system will be limited by the availability and cost of RDRAM modules.

Intel will make available two separate versions of the Brookdale chipset, an SDR and a DDR version. The SDR version is forecast to hit the market in September of 2001, with the DDR version arriving soon after. Interestingly enough, Intel wants the mainstream corporate market to move directly from the i815E platform to Brookdale, skipping the pricey i850 altogether. With the release of its ApolloPro 2001 chipset, VIA - which maintains a 40% marketshare in the chipset industry - will likely be one of the few sources for DDR-Pentium 4 chipsets in the future. Currently, Intel refuses to sell a bus license to ALi for the Pentium 4.

Meanwhile, Foster will be introduced late in the first quarter of 2001 at 1.4 GHz and 1.5 GHz. Foster is the codename of a projected replacement for the Pentium III Xeon. This chip, which will be intended for the workstation and server market, will integrate an extra-large cache on-die. Also, Foster is expected to work in a dual processor configuration. The Pentium 4, in contrast, is strictly a uniprocessor part.

Initial Impressions

Like the 3dfx and Nvidia war, people are quite obsessive about their favourite CPU. Some claim

that the newest Intel thoroughbred tramples the AMD competition, while others remain sceptical. Many assume, somewhat prematurely, that the Pentium 4 is the latest in an extensive list of embarrassments suffered by Intel, after the i820 and RDRAM disasters. Indeed, early leaked benchmarks weren't exactly favourable. However, we've been very impressed by our 1.5GHz Pentium 4 system with a GeForce 2 GTS Ultra. Contrary to some of the pessimistic pre-release reviews, the Pentium 4 performs up to expectations. The early lacklustre results may have resulted from early silicon, poor testing or shabby driver support. In 3D Mark and Quake III, the Pentium 4 really flexes its muscles - it's a real floating-point monster, making it perfect for 3D gaming. Coupled with the GeForce 2 GTS Ultra, the Pentium 4 is the fastest gaming rig we've used. Even last month's beast was edged out by the new P4 system...

However, the Pentium 4 is at the beginning of its life. Potential buyers are advised to wait until the platform matures. The Pentium 4 has a LOT of potential, particularly when it hits higher clockspeeds, but currently doesn't hit the right price/performance point. The exorbitant price of an i850 motherboard, Pentium 4 and around 128Mb of RDRAM, cannot be justified by the performance rewards. Thankfully, Intel is planning to aggressively market the Pentium 4, with a considerable price drop after New Year. Also, as speeds ramp-up, the launch Pentium 4s at lower clockspeeds should become much cheaper.

Next month, look for our definitive guide comparing the Athlon DDR and the Rambus equipped Pentium 4. Either way, it's an exciting time for the industry.



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Crystal Clear Dolby® Digital 5.1 Audio

Designed for a better Live!, the Sound Blaster Live! Platinum 5.1 delivers crystal clear Dolby Digital (AC-3) 5.1 audio for the best digital entertainment experience on your PC! Immerse yourself in DVD movies, music and games with crisp and realistic audio blasting from 6 discrete channels! And with fantastic features like a remote controller and Live! Drive IR's front panel connectivity that make your life easier, Sound Blaster Live! Platinum 5.1 is guaranteed to change the way you experience audio!

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EAX
DOLBY
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Hotware Reviews

CREATIVE LABS

BLASTER PC PRESTIGE

Distributor Creative

Price \$4299

SPECIFICATIONS

- Black chassis (eZLink, Live! Player, FM Tuner)
- Intel Pentium II 800
- Creative Via Apollo Pro 133A M/B
- 128Mb RAM
- 30Gb HDD
- Creative 12x DVD-ROM
- DTTS 2550 D Speakers
- 3D Blaster 2 GTS Videocard
- 56k V.90 Modem
- 17" Hi-Res Monitor
- Windows 98SE, McAfee Antivirus, Games

It seems that Creative Labs has its finger in every pie. Originally known for the industry standard SoundBlaster card, Creative is now responsible for videocards, speakers, mp3 players, DVD, modems and webcams...

Why wait for the conclusion. Let's cut to the chase. The Creative Blaster PC Prestige is the coolest PC ever to grace the PC

PowerPlay
offices,
bar

none. Take all the latest multimedia gadgetry from Creative, the most powerful PC components available and a slippery black motif, and you get a rather simplistic if passable description of the Blaster PC. As with a Dell or Gateway system, customers can tailor the Blaster PC to their own requirements. Want a CD burner? No problem. Want 256Mb of RAM? Done.

Radar reflective

In place of the usual beige box, the Prestige Blaster PC comes in a ninja-black finish - we've already dubbed our review unit the 'stealth PC'. Even the monitor, keyboard and mouse look impeccable in black. The chassis comes with a vast array of connectors, all conveniently hidden behind a plastic cover. This 'EZLink' panel provides easy access to two USB ports, a gameport, SPDIF-in and out, MIDI in and out, an optical output connector, a microphone jack and a headphone connector. Additional FireWire (IEEE 1394) ports are optional. Instead of clambering to the back of your PC, you can easily plug joysticks, headphones, control pads and other devices directly into the front of the computer. Rather like a console.

The internal specifications for the Blaster PC reads like a who's who of PC technology. Unlike

most package PC manufacturers, none of the features are skimped on. The 7200 RPM Hard Drive with ATA/100 is one of the fastest IDE drives we've used, and the impressive 30 gigs of storage should be sufficient for most users.

High performance

The 3D Blaster 2, based around the ever-popular Nvidia GeForce 2 GTS chipset, is the most important part of this gaming rig. The 3D Blaster 2 is a graphics powerhouse, and features a solid 32Mb of texture memory. For us, the Nvidia GeForce 2 GTS range of cards represents the current benchmark for 3D performance: it's the perfect adjunct to the Pentium III 'Coppermine' at 800MHz, offering a compelling mixture of high framerates and delicious visuals. The only disappointment in the visual subsystem is the 17" monitor. With a maximum resolution of 1280x1024, this isn't the monitor to really show off the GeForce 2 GTS's graphics capabilities.

Creative is a leader in PC audio technology, so it is no surprise that the Blaster PC is an audiophile's delight. Sound is provided courtesy of the Sound Blaster Live Platinum (sans 5.1), which is widely regarded as the ultimate PC soundboard. The Creative DTTS 2500 speaker setup is excellent for watching movies, and equally adept at convincing 3D sound. An internal 56k V.90 Creative ModemBlaster is an excellent bonus.

Quality DVD playback

A 12x DVD drive and hardware decoding board rounds off the package. Based on the ubiquitous Hollywood Plus design, the DVD decoding board provides perfect DVD output direct to a TV using an S-Video or composite connection. Picture quality is indistinguishable from a dedicated set-top box, and certainly better than the PS2 DVD capabilities. The bundled remote control is a great bonus for those who want to use the BlasterPC as the centrepiece of a full-featured home entertainment unit.

If you're not willing to get your hands dirty and fashion your own homemade rig, the Blaster PC is a compelling solution. The Blaster PC meshes the expandability, rich feature set and performance of a homemade PC with all the benefits associated with a retail PC, including a warranty and Creative's legendary driver support. Besides, it's only marginally more expensive than a traditionally styled no-frills PC. It will make your friends green with envy.



Do you
like our desktop
wallpaper?

CREATIVE

SOUNDBLASTER LIVE 5.1

Distributor

Creative

Price

\$249

The SoundBlaster Live 5.1 is the latest permutation in the mega-popular range of Live cards. The card is available in a variety of different bundles, including the feature packed SB Live 5.1 Platinum with the Live Drive II IR interface panel. The Live Digital Entertainment 5.1, reviewed here, is aimed at gamers, and distinguished by a low-price and a huge game bundle.

Dolby Digital, also otherwise known as AC3, is an audio technique developed by Dolby to compress up to six channels of digital surround sound into a single digital bitstream in order to reduce storage requirements. With a maximum of six separate 'discrete' channels, Dolby Digital allows for at least five speakers to be connected, as well as one subwoofer. This is commonly known as the 5.1 configuration. Dolby Digital is used in most cinemas and the DVD format to deliver perfect surround sound.

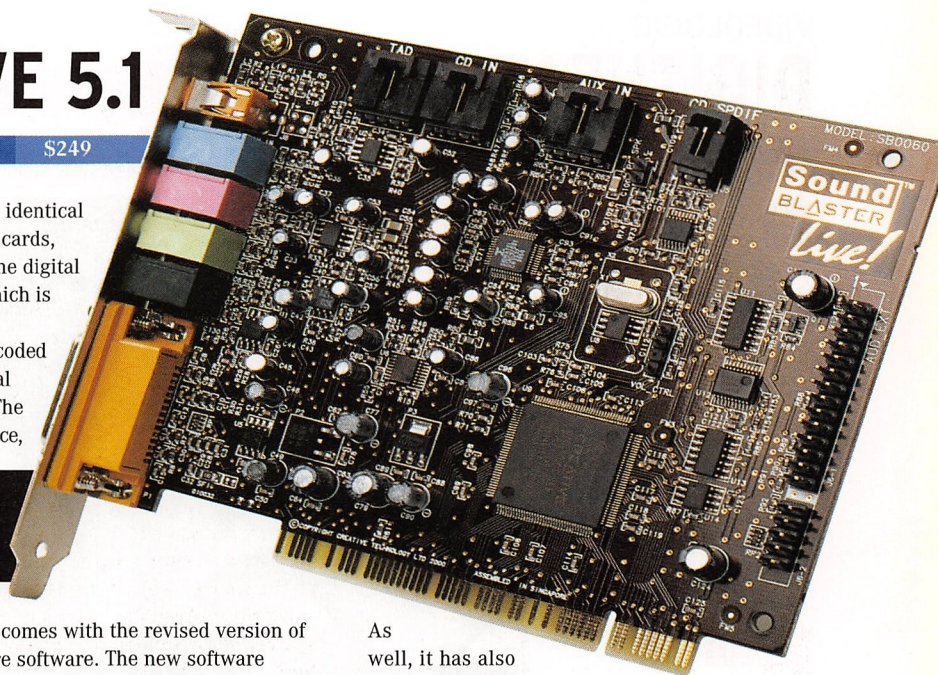
Meanwhile, PC-DVD has become enormously popular. The Live 5.1 is Creative's response to it, featuring built-in Dolby Digital (AC3) decoding and output via the EMU10K1 chipset. The

hardware is identical to the older cards, except for the digital out jack, which is now able to output a decoded Dolby Digital 5.1 signal. The only difference,

Catering for six speakers

apparently, comes with the revised version of the LiveWare software. The new software enables 5.1 output on the EMU10K1 chip. The Cambridge SoundWorks Desktop theatre DTT 2200 is an ideal match for the Live 5.1's abilities.

Unlike most hardware games bundles, the Live Digital Entertainment 5.1 also comes with a decent stash of titles - Creative has heeded our recommendations and included full versions of Thief II, Deus Ex and MDK2.



As well, it has also bundled the obligatory copy of CakeWalk 8.

As a huge DVD enthusiast, I love the 5.1 card. Some upcoming games are expected to include Dolby Digital 5.1 support. But frankly, if you don't give a toss about Dolby Digital or the games bundle, get the original SoundBlaster Live Value OEM. It's cheaper, anyway.

MAXTOR

EXTERNAL STORAGE 80 GIG DRIVE

Distributor

Maxtor

Price

TBA

The most notable feature of the Maxtor External Storage drive is the Firewire interface. Firewire was developed by Apple Computer, and has become enormously popular amongst digital movie enthusiasts and those requiring high-speed external devices.

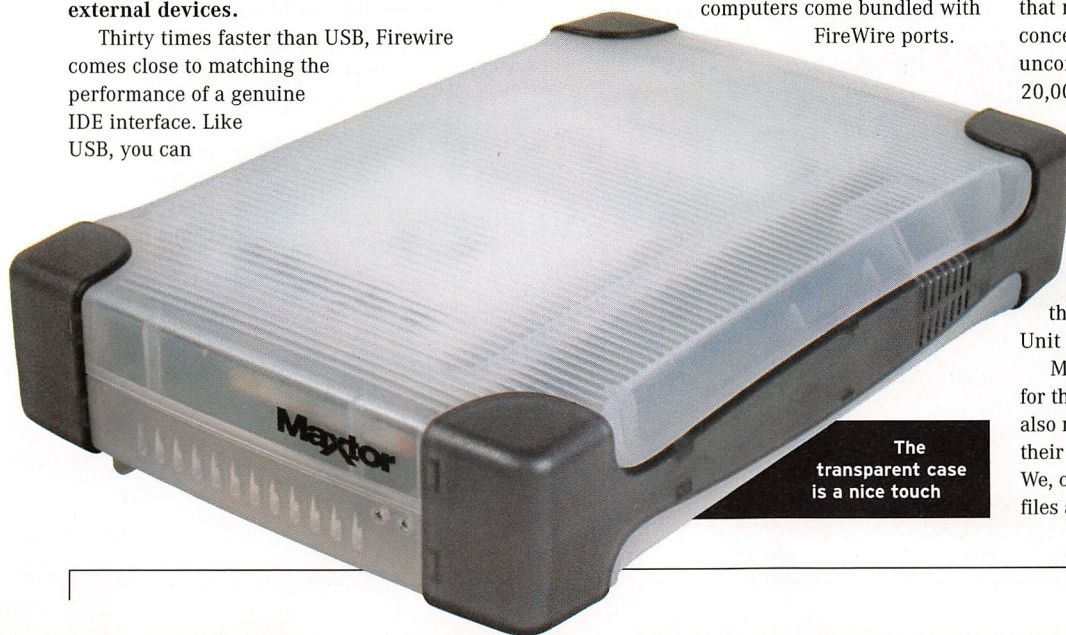
Thirty times faster than USB, Firewire comes close to matching the performance of a genuine IDE interface. Like USB, you can

'daisy-chain' devices, allowing up to 63 devices to operate on the single Firewire port. Firewire is also completely plug and play - once you've installed a Firewire card in your computer, the drive should be automatically recognised by Windows. It's worth noting that some modern computers come bundled with FireWire ports.

Alternatively, users can invest in a PCI Firewire board like the Maxtor 1394 Adaptor. These are widely available.

The drive is available in a variety of sizes. We tested the mammoth 80Gb unit, although a 40Gb drive is available. To get an idea of what that means, consider that 80Gb could conceivably store up to six hours of uncompressed digital video, 17 DVD movies, 20,000 Mp3 tunes or 8,000 high-resolution digital photos. It's particularly surprising then, that the drive is so small. The ultra sleek design will fit even in the most compact work area. Multiple drives can be stacked upon each other for maximum space conservation. Taking design cues from the iMac DV, the Maxtor External Storage Unit is a stylish unit.

Maxtor External storage is a perfect system for those with digital camcorders and laptops. It also makes sense for professionals transporting their work files between home and the office. We, on the other hand, used it for synchronising files and maps at LAN parties...



The transparent case is a nice touch

Hotware Reviews

VIDEOLOGIC

DIGITHEATRE LC

Distributor

Videologic

Price

\$675

The original DigiTheatre speaker setup included an integrated Dolby Digital decoder - the PC outputted a digital SPDIF bitstream, which was subsequently broken into six analog channels by an external 5.1 decoder. Six channel soundcards, including the Videologic SonicFury and the Creative Soundblaster 5.1, now support 5.1 sound in hardware. Ergo, Videologic has eliminated external 5.1 decoding from the package, and re-released the DigiTheatre at a low price as the DigiTheatre LC system for use in conjunction with a six channel audio card.

The system includes two front speakers, two satellite surround speakers, a centre speaker and a huge subwoofer. The DigiTheatre LC uses the same speakers and integrated amplifiers as the multi-award-winning DigiTheatre speaker system. The satellites have impressive high-range tonal qualities



More speakers
than you could
ever want

(perfect for mp3s and audio CDs), while the sub provides impressive, punchy bass. Although the system only outputs 60Watts true RMS, the sound impresses for music, games and films. The amplifier is integrated into the subwoofer, removing the need for costly and bulky external amplifiers, typical of most home cinema setups.

Obviously, there are additional expenses to getting these speakers working in full 5.1 mode; users will need to invest in either a Software DVD player with 5.1 output (WinDVD 5.1) or a hardware DVD decoder. Also, a six channel soundcard is essential.

We raved about the Sirocco Crossfire Speaker system, now, Videologic has surprised us with the awesome DigiTheatre LC. It's a highly economical solution for transforming your home-PC into a high-end DVD entertainment system. The DigiTheatre LC can also be used with a set-top home DVD player with DTS/5.1 support. The package is also available with a bundled version of WinDVD and the 5.1 compliant SonicFury soundcard.

ASUS

IPANEL PURE

Distributor

Cassa

Price

\$60

Back in the days of the 486, computer users could check the speed of their processor merely by glancing at the small LCD panel on the front of the case. For those of us with 66MHz 486DX/2s, this glowing green display was a source of immense pride - we could run Doom with *all* the effects turned on! On the flipside, it was an instrument of endless torment to our prole mates with inferior 33MHz processors.

Asus has attempted to resurrect those heady days with the iPanel. Connecting directly to the motherboard, the iPanel gives hardware enthusiasts an easy read out of the current system speed. It can also be used to display the CPU and chipset temperature, as well as fan speeds, FSB settings and internal voltage levels. It's an overclockers wet dream.

Sadly, the only board that supports the iPanel is Asus's own CUSL2 i815e board and the A7M266. Not even the A7V supports it, although all forthcoming motherboards from Asus (and possibly other manufacturers) should include the requisite connection header. An updated BIOS is essential. The unit

also features two handy USB ports for quick connection of peripherals. The forthcoming 'Deluxe' version of the iPanel will also include a headphone, microphone and serial port, in an attempt to match the Creative LiveDrive for sheer value.

This is certainly one of the most ridiculous products we've seen this year. However, if you're a Kyle Bennet type that subscribes to neon case lighting systems, blowholes and gas phase change cooling units, the iPanel is worth every penny.



Definitely one for
the 'core freaks

VIDEOLOGIC

DVD PLAYER

Distributor Videologic

Price \$235

With the growing popularity of DVD drives (how many new PCs don't come with one?) and home entertainment systems, increasing amounts of people are getting the opportunity to test out this new, superior media for films.

If your computer features a DVD-ROM drive, there are two options for watching DVD films. The most basic is to use a software DVD player, often found bundled with new videocards. Otherwise, a hardware DVD solution, like the Videologic DVD Player PCI board, will allow you to watch DVD movies on either a monitor or TV at optimal image quality and in full 5.1 surround sound. Hardware DVD playback is the original DVD solution for PCs, and still has a number of important advantages over software-only decoders.

Visual quality

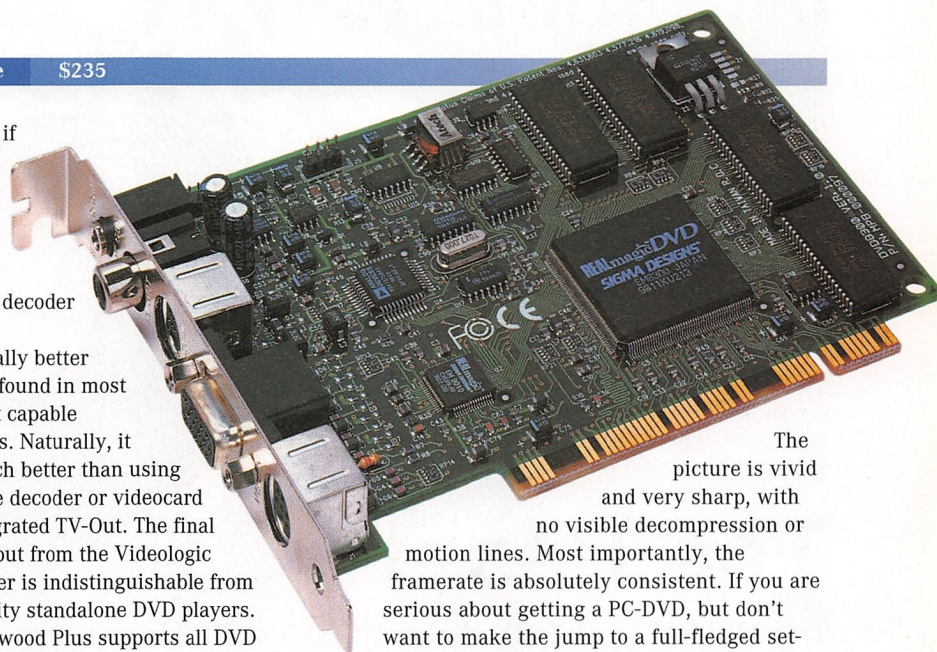
Hardware DVD players promise better visual quality, lower CPU utilisation and the ability to make almost any machine with a DVD drive capable of smooth DVD playback, regardless of the CPU speed. Since the CPU performs most of the decoding operations with a software DVD player, a fast CPU (400MHz or above) is required for smooth playback, whereas a hardware decoder offers great performance on practically all CPUs. In effect, a hardware card can be slapped in any old, low-end system and transform it into a full DVD home-entertainment unit. Thanks to the relatively low CPU use, someone can be watching a DVD movie on a nearby TV, while someone else is using the computer.

Using the EM8300 integrated MPEG2 decoder chip from Sigma Designs (featured on the OEM Hollywood Plus card), the DVD Player PCI add-in card works as an adjunct to your existing videocard to provide full-screen DVD playback. The EM8300 can also be used to decode standard Mpeg-1 and VCD files in hardware. It offers absolutely everything you need for DVD playback, including onboard Dolby Digital AC-3 5.1 and Dolby ProLogic sound processing. The card can output high quality Dolby Digital AC-3 5.1 audio through S/PDIF from the co-axial port directly to an external decoding box, like the full Videologic DigiTheatre. With the latest software, the DVD Player even supports DTS (Digital Theatre System) audio output through the same S/PDIF output jack. Users can view DVD movies on a monitor or TV screen via an S-Video or Composite connection. Using the S-Video output will yield optimal image quality, although you can get an S-Video to Composite

converter if needed. The TV output circuitry in hardware decoder cards is substantially better than that found in most TV-output capable videocards. Naturally, it looks much better than using a software decoder or videocard with integrated TV-Out. The final video output from the Videologic DVD player is indistinguishable from high quality standalone DVD players. The Hollywood Plus supports all DVD playback options from Widescreen display to subtitles and multiple language tracks.

Remote control

While the included onscreen interface isn't the most user-friendly piece of software around (apparently a re-skinned version of the Hollywood Plus software), Videologic does recommend the versatile ANIR handheld remote control, which is available for purchase directly from the ANIR website. The remote works via an external infrared adapter, which plugs into a serial port. With the clearly labelled remote, watching DVDs is a pleasure and means you don't have to turn your monitor on to alter settings or change tracks. It makes the DVD-watching experience much more seamless.



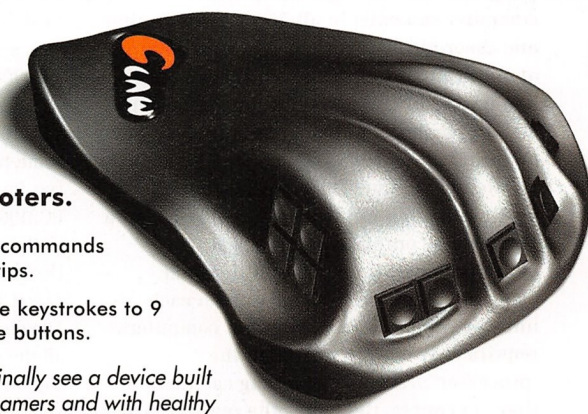
The picture is vivid and very sharp, with no visible decompression or motion lines. Most importantly, the framerate is absolutely consistent. If you are serious about getting a PC-DVD, but don't want to make the jump to a full-fledged set-top DVD box, then the Videologic DVD player is a great choice.

Unleash a world of pain upon your enemies

The Ultimate Controller for First Person Shooters.

- Customisable commands at your fingertips.
- Assign multiple keystrokes to 9 programmable buttons.

"...it's great to finally see a device built by gamers for gamers and with healthy dose of common sense too."
- Sharkygames.com Dec '00



FERRARO design
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CLAW

www.claw.com.au

Buy it online NOW!



The Beast

THE ULTIMATE RIG BY HUGH NORTON-SMITH

Almost all of today's computers are based on simple Turing theory. Even 'parallel' computers are really complex Turing engines employing multiple computing modules. Quantum computing is based on a different physics than digital computing. Instead of having two (or three) states-per-element like digital computers which are off, on, or neither, quantum computers can manifest all three states at the same time. An 8-bit digital computer can exist in only one of 256 states at a time while an eight bit quantum computer can exist in all 256 states at a time and theoretically, work on 256 calculations at once (quantum parallelism). Each of the 256 numbers in this 8-bit example has an equal probability of being measured so that a quantum processor functions as a random number generator. The actual register is representing all of these values at once but a single value output only occurs at measurement. While a classical digital computer would have to operate on each number from 0 to 255, quantum computers require only one pass through the "processor", radically reducing calculation time. Of course, the larger the register size, the larger the number - even a simple 10-bit quantum computer could scream past a supercomputer. In practice, such machines have not yet been built due to their extreme sensitivity. Until then, we have The Beast.

CPU: AMD Athlon 1.2GHz

At a staggering 1.2GHz, the AMD Athlon 'Thunderbird' is unbeatable. The AMD Athlon

has the most advanced floating point unit, 256k of integrated full speed L2 cache and a 200MHz EV6 Front Side Bus. The new DDR DRAM compliant motherboards demonstrate the full potential of the Athlon.

Motherboard: Asus A7M266

Using the AMD 761 and VIA 686B chipset, the Asus A7M is the first Athlon motherboard with DDR DRAM support to reach the PCPP labs. Using DDR DRAM, our A7M266 consistently thrashes our KT133 A7V board using PC133 SDRAM. As with all Asus components, the A7M is a marvel of modern engineering - it comes with an AGP Pro slot, a whopping 4 DDR DRAM expansion slots, ATA/100 support and a host of overclocking features.

RAM: 256Mb PC2100 DDR DRAM

256Mb RAM should keep the Beast in check for some time. Excellent for times when you need to run Photoshop, Deus Ex and Q3 simultaneously! PC2100 is the fastest rated DDR DRAM.

SCSI Card: Adaptec AHA-39160

Dual channel Ultra160 SCSI card from Adaptec.

Hard Drive: 4x Seagate Cheetah X15 18Gb

The fastest hard disk available, the X15 trounces all the competition. The SCSI X15 runs at a huge 15,000 rpm, and has a chunky 4Mb of cache. If you buy a couple of these, you can run them in a redundant RAID array...with a maximum storage of 18Gb, you'll need a couple to satisfy all your storage needs.

Optical Drive: Ricoh MP9120A

With the M9120A, Ricoh have combined the functionality of a DVD-ROM and a CD-RW drive into one compact unit. The MP9120A can read at 32x, write at 12x, rewrite at 10x and read DVD-ROM at 8x. Very impressive.

Videocard: Asus V7800

The GeForce 2 GTS Ultra is the fastest graphics accelerator that's on the market - coupled with 64Mb of DDRAM and Asus' cool SmartDoctor utilities, the V7800 is the one to beat. We decided not to go with the Quadro based video card, as we tend to cater more to the gamer's needs than the graphics professional.

Soundcard: SB Live! 5.1 Platinum

The SB Live! Platinum package includes the perennially popular SBLive! 5.1 Card, as well as the Live Drive II Optical interface with IR. AC3 in hardware is very cool. It also comes bundled with a massive software package.

Speakers: Videologic Sirocco Crossfire

The Crossfire setup has it all: 4 speaker surround, a hefty bass bin and music fidelity that puts a Rotel system to shame. The perfect adjunct to the SB Live! Platinum.

Monitor: Sony G500 21" Trinitron

Able to pull off 2048x1536, this is bound to impress the mates, especially when used in conjunction with a capable videocard like the V7800. Big, flat and sexy. Best of all, it's a Sony.

Case: Supermicro SC750-A

The Supermicro 750 is a behemoth. It can hold up to 16 fans, is equipped with an AMD approved 400W Sparkle power supply, and has wheels on the bottom! A quality case like this could conceivably outlast the rest of the components in your computer.

Networking: 3COM 3C905C-TX

3Com have a reputation for making the best networking cards. The PCI-based 3C905C is no exception, with the best drivers and support available.

AGP-V7100 Series

Experience Radical 3D/2D Graphics Performance with 2nd Generation GPU

GeForce2 MX



TwinView

AGP-V7100Series graphics cards are born to provide mainstream PC users with the radical 3D/2D graphics and video performance of 2nd generation GPU-"GeForce2 MX". With TwinView™ architecture, ASUS presents the most comprehensive models in AGP-V7100 series graphics cards to fit the diversified needs of video output, including dual display with RGB monitor, TV, digital flat panel.

AGP-V7100 series not only completely exerts the power of NVIDIA's GeForce2 MX GPU, but also continues ASUS' tradition of providing the greatest security for your valuable entertainment platform. So, just experience the radical 3D/2D graphics performance with the flexible options of the ASUS AGP-V7100 series.



AGP-V7100 Series

- AGP-V7100/2V1D : GeForce2 MX, 2VGA + 1DVI, 32 MB/16 MB SDRAM
 - AGP-V7100/DVI : GeForce2 MX, VGA + DVI, 32 MB/16 MB SDRAM
 - AGP-V7100/T : GeForce2 MX, VGA + TV-out, 32 MB/16 MB SDRAM
 - AGP-V7100/PURE : GeForce2 MX, VGA , 32 MB/16 MB SDRAM
- * And other combinations of dual display (depends on the request)

Available Hot Products

AGP-V7700 Series



- AGP-V7700 Deluxe TV:
GeForce2 GTS, 32MB DDR, SGRAM, TV-out, Video-in, VR 3D glasses, TV-Box
- AGP-V7700 Deluxe :
GeForce2 GTS, 32MB DDR, SGRAM, TV-out, Video-in, VR 3D glasses

- AGP-V7700 / T / 64MB:
GeForce2 GTS, 64MB DDR, SDRAM, TV-out
- AGP-V7700 / T / 32MB:
GeForce2 GTS, 32MB DDR, SGRAM, TV-out
- AGP-V7700 / 64MB:
GeForce2 GTS, 64MB DDR, SDRAM, w/o SmartDoctor
- AGP-V7700 / 32MB:
GeForce2 GTS, 32MB DDR, SGRAM

AGP-V3800 Magic Series



- AGP-V3800 Magic / T:
TNT2 M64, 32/16MB, SDRAM, TV-out
- AGP-V3800 Magic:
TNT2 M64, 32/16MB, SDRAM

AGP-V300C:



- SiS 305, 16MB, SDRAM

SETUP

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

DANIEL RUTTER WAXES TECHNICAL



WRITE TO

SETUP

PC PowerPlay
PO Box 634
Strawberry Hills
NSW 2016
setup@pcpowerplay.com.au

When you write remember to include as much pertinent information as possible. Send your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT and any associated *.INI files for Windows that might tell me more about your problem. Give me as detailed an explanation as you can and be sure to include as much detail as possible about your PC.

Feel free to email your questions or, if you want to snail mail, please remember to write clearly or better still print your letters. Please note that due to the volume of messages we receive, we cannot guarantee a response to all of your queries.

DAMAGING DEMOS?

Q I have been told by a computer technician that demo discs and music CDs can have bad effects on your CD-ROM drive, because demo disks are poor quality and music CDs aren't meant for computers. I'm just wondering, because we just recently had to replace our CD-ROM drive, and I use a lot of demo discs.

Byron

A That is, to use a technical term, a bunch of hooley. It's theoretically possible for badly unbalanced CDs to damage a drive, but if it's not buzzing like a lawnmower, that definitely isn't happening.

Modern CD-ROM drives spin very fast indeed; a mere "40X" drive does more than 8,000 revolutions per minute. If your drive's whipping the disc around 150-odd times a second, then minor changes in the disc balance can make a very big difference to the amount of noise the drive makes, and the amount of stress its spinning parts are under.

Since commodity IDE CD-ROM drives are built down to a price, not up to a standard, then using unbalanced discs in them can indeed send them to an early grave. But if it ain't buzzing, it ain't damaging anything.

I don't know WHERE this alleged technician got the idea about music discs. Play a music disc in a CD-ROM drive and it'll only spin it at 1X Constant Linear Velocity (CLV) - changing the rotational speed so the

same amount of disc goes past the laser per second, whether it's looking at the middle or the edge of the disc.

1X CLV tops out at only 500RPM. Which means you could pretty much hang an automotive wheel weight on the edge of the disc, if it'd fit, and not damage the drive. Maybe some drives have dodgy speed control hardware that drops dead if you play lots of audio CDs. I haven't heard of any, though.

On the subject of CD-ROM rotational balance, strength and durability, by the way, you really can't go past <http://www.qedata.se/en-cdrom.htm>. Trust me on this one.

MORE RAM! MORE RAM!

Q I will skip the butt-kissing that usually goes on in your hallowed pages and get to the point: I have a PII-350 with an (Astro-Boy) S3 video card and a slightly less (Akira) Creative Voodoo2 8Mb. I also have a (Sailor Moon) big amount of RAM, namely 128Mb (well, (Sailor Moon) big for this computer's time). Anyway, I was reading an article on Anachronox, which is so kick-ass (Nnngh - Ed), and it said that I would require at least a 12Mb Voodoo2.

As I love this game dearly, my heart was crushed at the news.

I have heard that you can share main RAM with the video (as some built in graphics cards motherboards do). I want to divvy the RAM into 120 main, +4 for the Voodoo2 (12Mb) and finally +4 into the S3 ((Battle Angel Alita)ed up card!!). The question is: How exactly do I do this?

The Parkhills

A [If you are wondering about all of the anime references, it's an in-joke. Check out some of our back issues - Ed]

How exactly do you do this? You (Gundam) don't. As you say, some integrated-video motherboards use main memory for the graphics adapter, but they do this over the AGP bus. They do not have a shared memory pool.

They may not even have an AGP slot, but the video hardware connects with main memory via AGP protocols. This works no better than normal AGP, though. Which is to say, not very well at all.

You can't shovel data into video memory fast enough to make up for not having enough memory on the card. The Sony PlayStation2 can do it, because it has ultrabodacious inter-component bandwidth. PCs, even cutting-edge PCs with DDR or Rambus memory and AGP 4X, don't have pipes fat enough. This is why they have to rely on ridiculous amounts of on-card video memory, so you can load all the texture data you need for a whole level of a 3D game into card memory at the start of the level, and avoid thrashing while you play.

To confuse things, there's the Intel i810 chipset. Some motherboards which use this chipset can accept an extra video RAM module that gives the built-in graphics adapter some more memory of its own. That module doesn't add anything to main memory, though; it's just like one of those older-model video cards with a RAM expansion socket.

So unless you can scrape together enough money to buy, say, a basic TNT2 board or similar newer graphics adapter, you're royally (Patlabored).

WINDOWS ME, BABY!

Q I am baffled by the following problem with Windows Millennium Edition.

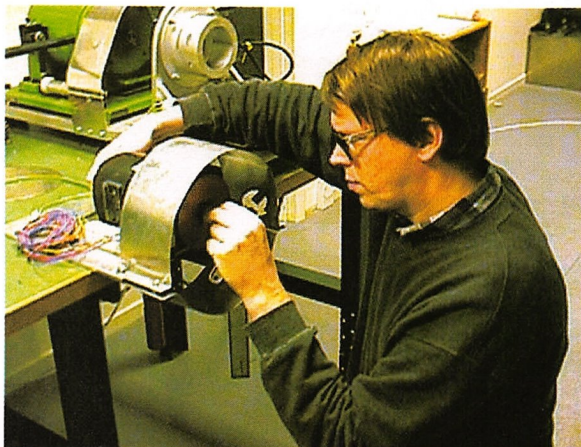
I have a Pentium 800 with 256Mb RAM. Having installed WinME and having set up the network (we have 4 computers here) I find that all the computers have problems when they try to access "ENTIRE NETWORK", because the computer repeatedly reports "Unable to browse network, Windows is unable to gain access to the network".

But all the computers can find and see each other and swap files by creating a shortcut when you search for other computers, and access the Internet even if they have different workgroup names. So everything is working OK except the ability to browse the entire network.

Have I missed something here?

John Watt

What we've got here is failure to communicate. I always wanted to say that. Point one - computers with nothing shared won't show up in Network



LETTER OF THE MONTH

LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS...

AN INCREDIBLE SIDEWINDER GAMEVOICE ONLINE COMMUNICATION PERIPHERAL, COURTESY OF THE NICE PEOPLE AT MICROSOFT. HURRAH FOR THAT!

CPU OF THE BEAST!

Q I am the owner of a 667MHz Pentium III system. I am curious, whenever I use programs that tell you the clock speed of your CPU, they always say 666MHz, but you'll never see a P-III on sale or advertised at 666MHz. I think it seems logical, if there are 566, 866, 533, 633, and 733MHz processors available.

My theory is that because 666 is a satanic number, a chip at this speed would be bad PR for Intel. So even though the CPU is at 666MHz, they say 667MHz so people who might buy one aren't discouraged and those who own one can rest in peace.

What do you guys think?

And, might I add, my PIII-666/667 is a devilishly fast bit of silicon.

Peter Neilson

A IN NOMINE MAGNI DEI NOSTRI SATANUS INTROIBO AD ALTARA- Oh, sorry. Didn't see you there. Ahem.

The question of precise CPU core speed numbers bothers a lot of computer users. It doesn't bother them a LOT, since their processor is certainly running at almost exactly the advertised speed. Whether your "667MHz" CPU clocks in at 665 or 668 or the Aleister Crowley-approved 666, there obviously won't actually be a perceptible speed difference.

But why DO you see these small differences, and why isn't there officially a P-III 666? Well, your CPU has a 133MHz Front Side Bus (FSB) speed and a 5X multiplier for the core speed. Work that out, and you get 665MHz.

But the FSB isn't really meant to be 133MHz - it's meant to be 133 and a third. Round that off to a clean number of megahertz that's easy to print on the box and it's 133. But if the FSB's actually right on 133 and a third, a 5X multiplier will give you a core speed of 666 and two thirds - six hundred and sixty-six point six, repeater. Round THAT off, and you get the rather unsatisfying 667.

This goes for all of the other P-IIIs with speeds ending in 66 - the 866, for instance, is really an 866-and-two-thirds megahertz processor.

You get a nice clean number on boot-up because the BIOS doesn't look at the real core speed of the processor - it just checks the FSB speed and the multiplier the CPU uses and then



displays a processor ID to match. This may or may not reflect the real core speed of the processor; it depends on how accurately the real FSB speed the motherboard generates matches up to the speed it tells you it's generating. The bus speed doesn't affect the real time clock, or anything, so it doesn't matter if it's a little off.

To get a true 666.0MHz CPU, you'll be wanting a 133.2MHz FSB speed, which some motherboards may actually deliver when asked to do 133MHz FSB, or 132 or 134 in the case of single-megahertz-step overclockers' boards. Now then, where was I? Ah yes. AD ALTARA DOMINI INFERI-

Darn. Now did anybody see where the goat went?

Evil inside? We think not



Neighborhood, or Computers Near Me, or Fuzzy Happy Friendly Squeaky Networky Thing, or whatever Microsoft's calling it today. Just enabling File And Printer Sharing isn't enough. You have to actually share one or more directories or printers, or nobody else will see you. Fair enough - there's nothing you could DO from Network Neighborhood with a computer that isn't sharing anything.

Point two - if you don't have File and Printer Sharing turned on on ANY of the computers in a given workgroup, you'll get this error.

This has to do with the Windows network handling, whereby the studliest computer in a workgroup gets to be the "browse master" and runs the global Network Neighborhood list.

Windows has no other way to display things in Network Neighborhood (or the WinME equivalent). No browse master, no Neighborhood.

"Studliest", above, means the machine running the most impressive version of Windows. Win 3.1 machines give way to Win95 ones, which give way to Win98, and so on through WinNT Workstation and Win2000 Workstation and WinNT Server and Win2000 Server.

Plug, say, an NT box into a Win98 network, and it will be made the browse master, possibly resulting in several minutes of Network Neighbourhood confusion as the master list gets moved. If you've got more than 15 computers in your workgroup, backup browse servers will also be designated to reduce the load on the browse master. When a new

master is elected, the backup servers can take a long time to be updated. Until they are, the apparent status of the network won't change. Only machines with File and Printer Sharing installed are eligible to be a browse master; if none of them are set up that way, you will ALWAYS get the exact error you are getting.

This issue, and how to access shared resources directly without bothering with Network Neighborhood, is explained in more detail here:

<http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/Q256/2/35.ASP>

If that ain't it, try this Microsoft page: <http://support.microsoft.com/support/kb/articles/Q272/9/91.ASP>

And if _that_ ain't it, may I suggest Win2000 :-)?

TECH TIP

ALL ABOUT ME

Incidentally, Microsoft want the world to refer to WinME as "Windows Me", with a lower case "e", possibly because that's what someone at Redmond fantasises about a beautiful woman saying to him. Hey, with Bill Gates' kind of money, you can find someone who will say whatever you want.

The name of the operating system, though, is Windows Millennium Edition, so Windows ME, or WinME for short, is what I'm a'calling it. The Goods and Services Tax isn't GST for short, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation isn't NATO, either. I'm such a rebel.

CONSTRUCTION CONUNDRUMS

Q I'm building a brand spanking new rig, and I cannot choose the right graphics card. I don't want to spend more than \$500, but I want good colour quality, and I don't want to upgrade for at least a year. I was considering either a GeForce 256 DDR or a GeForce 2 MX. If I go with the former, I'll have over a year old technology, but it performs well. If I go with the latter, the technology will be better, but the performance is worse, and the RAM lets it down at higher res.

With the advent of the GeForce2 Ultra, will prices come down? And lastly, is there any chance of a 32MB DDR MX? To further add to this dilemma, I hope to get a Pentium 4 CPU; how will that affect things?

Also, I am a very capable computer user, and I am considering buying Windows 2000. I am sick and tired of Win 98's crap and errors, and from what I hear from mates, reviews, and professionals, Win ME isn't much better. For just one powerful, capable PC and user, would Win2k work well? Because I have heard of problems for user access and networking, although my new PC would be just a stand alone, occasionally networked, rig.

Mike

A Two quick answers, one slow one. If you've got a 17 inch or smaller monitor, you definitely want a GeForce2 MX, not a GeForce DDR (Dual Data Rate). The MX performs as well as the older board with the more expensive memory in resolutions below 1280 by 960, which are all you can clearly display on a small-to-medium screen.

If you've got a 19 inch monitor, it's a judgement call; there's still not much in it, but the older DDR board will be a bit faster in 1280 by 960-ish resolutions.

If your monitor is so big that NASA space probes use its gravitational field for orbital slingshot manoeuvres, the extra fill rate that DDR memory gives the GeForce DDR, and the GeForce2 GTS for that matter, will give you better frame rates at really high resolutions.

The faster-clocked GeForce2 Ultra will, of course, drive prices down a bit. It's possible that some faster DDR MX cards will come out at some point, but the major price-reducing feature of the MX is its cheaper SDR (Standard Data Rate) memory. That's almost the only reason why MX cards cost around \$300 and full GeForce2 boards cost around \$600 - or rather more, for 64Mb ones. Yes, Creative

have their 3D Blaster Annihilator 2 DDR out now, but it uses 64 bit DDR memory, versus the 128 bit SDR memory of everyone else's MX cards, and ends up with no performance advantage at all.

How will a P4 affect things? Well, it'll suck all of the money out of your wallet, for a start. As I write this, P4s are available through retail channels in Japan and a few other places, but you can't actually buy motherboards for the new CPU yet. So I hope I never get stuck in a lift with any of the people who are buying the things right now.

Once P4s and motherboards to suit become commonly available - as they may be, by the time you read this - you'll still be talking an easy \$1500 for a 1.4GHz one, and probably

A 1.4GHz P4 machine may beat a current 1GHz Athlon one by, oh, maybe 30% in raw CPU grunt. That translates to a smaller, but still noticeable, game performance increase. I'm buggered if I would pay the thick end of \$1000 for it.

I'm pretty much pulling that performance estimate out of my fundamental orifice, though, since I'm writing this before any proper P4 benchmarks have come out. But if the P4 were a brutally powerful paradigm-smashing ultra-processor, Intel would have said as much, I reckon.

Instead, they've released very close to no P4 performance numbers at all, which suggests that the new chip ain't nothin' special compared with fast P-IIIs. It may actually work out slower than a 1.2GHz Athlon for desktop tasks. Which would be a bit of an embarrassment for Intel, wouldn't you think?

The P4 will be better than current Athlons and P-IIIs when you can buy it in 2GHz and faster versions, of course. But the early low-speed P4s, like the early low-speed P-IIIs and P-IIs, seem unlikely to be a very good buy at all.

Because the P4 motherboards have four extra through-board mounts for the half-kilo (!) stock heat sink, they need a special case as well. You could hack a P4 board into an older case, but it'd be a bit of a pain.

You also need one of the new ATX12V power supplies with the extra 12 volt connector, for motherboard power-boosting. More expense.

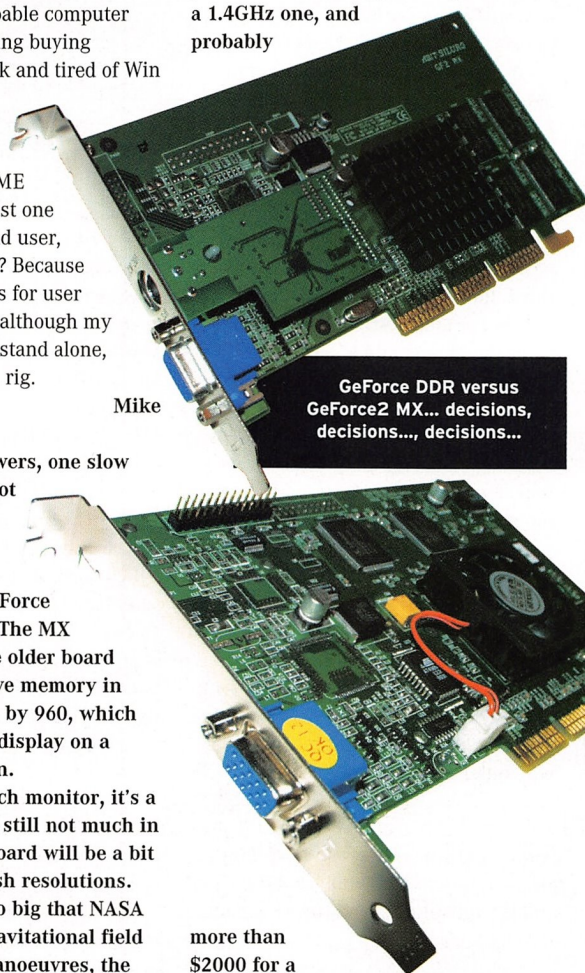
Oh, and all of the P4 motherboards I know of use Rambus memory.

Which is not as stupidly expensive as it used to be, but still costs more than it's worth.

So, all told, a 1.4GHz P4 machine with a decent amount of RAM could easily work out \$1500 to \$2000 more expensive than an only marginally slower box built out of older components. Woo-hoo.

In answer to your Windows 2000 question - if you're sick of crashes, get it. Programs still crash in Windows 2000, but it's a lot harder for them to bring the whole computer down with them, and the OS itself is far less prone to suddenly screaming "I'm a teapot!" and leaping in front of a bus, like Win98. I exaggerate Win98's behaviour. Slightly.

And Win2K's game performance, which not quite as good as Win98's, doesn't suck. All current PC games and a surprising number of old ones work in Win2K. Most manufacturers' Win2K drivers are mature enough now that there's not much risk in switching. But it's RAM-hungry; more than 128Mb is a good idea.



more than \$2000 for a 1.5GHz. Without the (expensive) motherboard. They might not be commonly available for a while, though; have you tried to buy a top-spec P-III over the counter lately?

Given that a 1GHz Athlon will, by the time you read this, be well under \$700, and also given that the P4 follows Intel's usual line of not actually being all that much faster on initial release than the last version of the previous-model CPU, some rather serious questions need to be asked about anybody who bothers with one at the moment.

AOpen



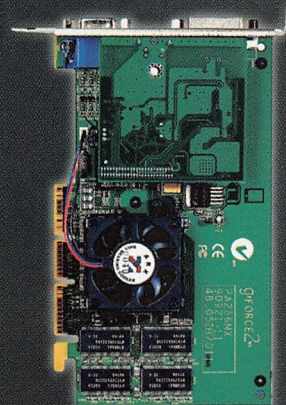
There's nothing like the great outdoors. Especially when it's whipping past your window at 200mph on the autobahn. Introducing the **Geforce MX Deluxe**, one of the fastest **3D graphic rendering engines** on earth. With nearly 350mhz it will catapult you from 0-60 mph in 1.2 seconds. Its massive brakes and beefed graphics engine provides rock-solid handling in the tightest turns. And for an even greater thrill, they don't come any faster than the **Geforce 2 GTS chipset**. Race in to your nearest **Servex** dealer and **feel the need for speed**.

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**Geforce MX
Deluxe**

CD POWERPLAY #57



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Welcome to the latest CD PowerPlay. As you can see we've slightly changed the interface to fit more writing on the screen and make it look a touch more professional. Consider it a minor facelift, or a change of scenery, just as long as the bosses are happy. Over time we'll slowly tweak it to include more of what you need. If you have any suggestions, abuse or maybe find a bug or two just let us know. (Letter bombs will not be accepted).

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DEMOS CD1

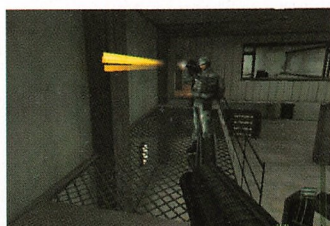
PROJECT IGI

Category Action

Publisher Eidos Interactive

Need P300, 64MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Accelerator

You've survived worse...but not by much. Now you have to bandage your wounds, infiltrate a fortified Russian Base, disable the security system, and get the goods...then the real excitement begins! I'm Going In is the first military stealth shooter to stress cunning and covertness over firepower. Use all the latest spy equipment and weapons to get the job done without detection.



Controls

Up - Forward
Down - Back
Strafe Left - Left
Strafe Right - Right
Mouse - Target
Left Mouse - Fire
Right Mouse - Next Weapon
Backspace - Alternate Fire
Return - Reload
Right shift - activate
right control - crouch
numeric pad 0 - jump
numeric pad 1- peek
spacebar - use binoculars
c - use map
w - toggle walk/run

page up / down - zoom in or out
1 - 9 toggle weapons

MOTORCROSS MANIA

Category Racing Sim

Publisher Take 2 Interactive

Need P2-266, 64MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Accelerator

Motocross Mania is the latest extreme sports offering from Deibus Studios, developers of the acclaimed motocross titles "Edgar Torronteras Extreme Biker" and "Moto-X 2000", which even inspired new real-life stunts in the sport such as the one-handed chicken and the unbelievable 360° rotation. This new motocross feast contains four distinct game styles, with players competing in fast and furious races on stadium-based supercross circuits and across a multitude of wild outdoor motocross tracks.

PACIFIC WARRIORS

Category Flight Sim

Publisher Virgin Interactive

Need P133, 32MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Accelerator

Pacific Warriors is a WWII air combat game. It's an action packed 3D game, where the player will face countless enemies in the air as well as on the ground. He pilots different kinds of American fighter aircrafts. A "radar" will guide him through level after level, where stronger and stronger enemies will confront him the farther he gets. Power-ups, machine guns and special weapons will be at his disposal, and aid his progress.

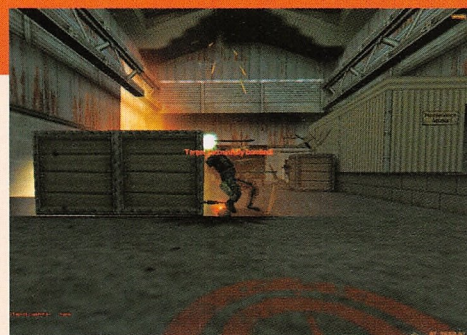
Controls

Up - Forward
Down - Back
Left - Left
Right - Right
A - Speed up
Z = Speed down
shift - fire
q - cycle primary weapons
w - cycle secondary weapons
alt - fire secondary weapons

SPOTLIGHT CD1

HALF-LIFE COUNTERSTRIKE 1.0

The official Half-Life Counterstrike has finally arrived. This mod lets one team plays the role of the terrorist unit and the other team plays the role of the antiterrorist unit. Each side has access to different guns and equipment, and has different abilities. Maps have different goals, such as hostage rescue, assassination, killing the entire opposing force, and more.



- 1 - select rockets
- 2 - select torpedos
- 3 - select bombs
- 4 - select clusters

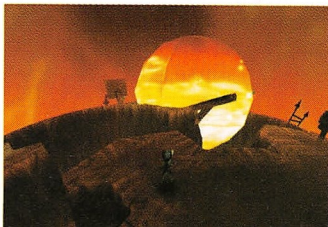
NO ESCAPE

Category Action

Publisher FunCom

Need P133, 32MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Accelerator

No Escape is the biggest, coolest, most popular TV-show ever. Transmitted live from a gigantic studio aboard an



orbiting space station - and watched by billions. No Escape features up to eight skilled contestants battling each other on tiny, artificial planets created specifically for the show. Brought to the studio in a luxurious space limousine, the stars of the show leave such comforts behind when they're forced to shoot, jump, sneak about,

and bomb their opponents to smithereens - all to get the high score and win the grand prize!

Controls

Cursors - Direction

Space - Jump

Mouse - Aim Gun

Left Mouse Button - Shoot

Right Mouse Button - Shoot

FROGGER 2

Category Action

Publisher FunCom

Need P200, 32MB, Win95/98/ME

Swampy the Crocodile and FroggerÆ have never gotten along. Frogger always got the glory and Swampy got the gloom. Now Swampy has run off with the poor lost Frog Babies and it's up to Frogger to get them back!

Controls

Cursors/joystick - Move Frogger!

Enter or button A - Superhop in the direction Frogger is facing. Jump to places a normal hop won't take you. Hit again to double-jump and jump over enemies!

Right Shift or button B - Use your tongue to collect items

Right Ctrl or button C - Croak! The

nearest baby frog will reply, helping you to find it

Escape - Pause the game

STAR TREK VOYAGER: ELITE FORCE HALO DEMO

Category Action

Publisher Interplay

Need P233, 64MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Accelerator

Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force is the ultimate, sci-fi first-person shooter using the Quake III Arena(TM) engine.



The first game based on Star Trek Voyager universe, Elite Force pits players against a multitude of Star Trek enemies, including the relentless Borg and never-before-seen aliens, in intense single-player and multiplayer combat missions.

This new demo of the Holomatch offers all three game play modes of

GAMEPLAY CDI

PATCHES

Alien Nation

Axis

Balders Gate 2

Blade Demo Fix

Crimson Skies

Dark Reign 2

Grand Prix 3

Heavy Metal FAKK 2

Jagged Alliance 2

Jetfighter 4

Midtown Madness 2

Monkey Island 4

No Escape

Panzer General III

Red Alert 2

Rune

Sacrifice

Starship Troopers

Vemon

Warlords Battlecry

TECH CDI

RAM IDLE 1.01

RAM Idle will increase your performance by making more physical memory available for your system. This program will automatically free up a set amount of RAM and defragment it when a minimum of free RAM is reached.

WINIMAGE 5.0.5002

WinImage is a powerful disk utility that enables users to make disk image from floppy, extract file from image, make an empty image, put the image on blank disk and more. WinImage supports many different formats, including Microsoft new DMF format.

MINMAX EXTENDER

We're all very familiar with the minimize, maximize and restore buttons in Windows. This utility takes this one step further by letting you add up to four new buttons to the title bar of your current window.

SYSTEM MECHANIC

System Mechanic is a set of 15 utilities designed to ensure that your system is in top shape. With it, you can speed up your Internet connection; clean and optimize your system registry, find and clean junk and obsolete files and much more.

GAMEPLAY CDI

DIRECT X8.0

DirectX is the multimedia system foundation for Windows operating systems. This latest version of DirectX offers updated graphics, faster frame rates, and support for massively multiplayer games. This version overwrites all previous versions of Direct X.

HALF-LIFE CANNED TUNA MOD

Canned Tuna is one of those "shoot everything that moves, and if it doesn't move, shoot it until it does", smash everything with as much firepower as possible mods. Spoonman gives it two thumbs up so you know it's worth checking out.

HALF-LIFE FRONT LINE FORCE MOD

In Front Line Force, the players are divided into two teams: Attackers and Defenders. The Attackers' object is to collect various Capture Points spread throughout the map and the Defenders' object is to defend those points. It's fast and wild so watch out.

HALF-LIFE WIZARD WARS MOD

Wizard Wars is a new Half-Life mod that pits teams of spell flinging wizards head to head in a magical maelstrom! Wizard Wars lets you choose from eight different sorcerers, each with varying strengths and special abilities, to battle other mages.

HALF-LIFE THEY HUNGER MOD

Tired of always fighting the same Half-Life enemies? Accept an invitation to vacation in a small quiet town. They Hunger is a traditional horror story without soldiers or aliens. All will be revealed as you play through the episodes but remember trust no one.

KINGPIN COLLECTION

More and more Kingpin fans are coming out of the closet these days so it's only fair we give them another batch of addons to keep them out of trouble. Back by popular demand, more maps, models, mods, and skins you could ever want for Kingpin. Enjoy...

VAMPIRES WOD MAGE MOD 1.01

This excellent mod for Vampires - The Masquerade comes packed with many features including a full set of Correspondence rites (such as teleportation), heaps of new skins, as well as loads of other goodies. Install it before dawn.

DIABLO 2 CHARACTER EDITOR

One of the absolute best character editors for Diablo II. You can edit various stats such as strength, vitality, max mana, experience, character class, and so on. This editor has been tested with Diablo II 1.00 to 1.03 versions.

GAMESPY ARCADE 1.0

GameSpy Arcade matches people with each other and the PC games they want to play. It supports everything from hardcore action classics - like Quake or UT - to classic, board, even strategy games. Whatever you want to play, GameSpy Arcade helps you get started.



DEMOS CONTINUED

the full game for you to try and enjoy. Several changes were made to Elite Force between the time of its original demo in July 2000 and the release of the game in September 2000. This demo reflects the multiplayer of the shipping version of STV: Elite Force.

Mouse Controls

Look Left/Right/Up/Down - Mouse Movement
Move Forward - Right Mouse Button
Fire - Left Mouse Button
Secondary Fire - Middle Mouse Button
Switch Weapons - Mouse Wheel
Up/Down

Keyboard Controls

Move Forward/Back - "Up Arrow" or "Down Arrow"
Turn Left/Right - "Left or Right Arrow"
Strafe (Move) Left/Right - ", " or ". "

SERVER CD1

SPYCOP 1.1

This SpyCop detection and deletion software will search your computer and tell you what spyware programs are on your system. SpyCop finds advertising spyware and spy programs designed specifically to record your screen, email, passwords and much more!

ISPEED 2.80

The simple changes that are facilitated by using iSpeed can easily

increase your throughput on the internet by 30% or more! What does that mean? Faster web browsing, faster downloads, quicker action for those internet multiplayer games.

ANYMAIL 1.0

AnyMail checks almost any web-based email, including Hotmail, Yahoo, Excite, Altavista, Onebox, Gogonet, Freenet, etc. It notifies you if it detects new mail. Then, you can

access your inbox directly without logging in again!

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Fire - "Ctrl" (Left or Right)
Secondary Fire - "M"
Use/Open - "Spacebar"

Jump - "/" or "D"
Select Weapon - "1" through "9" (Not on Number Pad)

Special Commands

Crouch - "N" or "C"
Select Prev/Next Item - "[" or "]"
Skip Cutscenes - "Enter"
Mission Info/Objectives - "Tab"

DEMOS CD2

FUR FIGHTERS

Category Action/Fighting

Publisher Acclaim

Need P2-300, 32MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Card

The Fur Fighters are an elite fighting force of stuffed animals on a mission to rescue their families from the evil General Viggo. The Fur Fighters must battle their way through Viggo's legions of Stupid Bears and solve

diabolical puzzles to save their babies, rescue their mutated kin in six outrageous boss levels and snatch the planet from Viggo's clutches.

Controls

Up - Forward
Down - Back
Strafe Left - Left
Strafe Right - Right
Mouse - Target

Left Mouse - Fire
Right Mouse - Jump
Page up - cycle weapons up
Page down - cycle weapons down
Tab - scores
T - Chat

SWEDISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP 2

Category Driving Sim

Publisher Digital Illusions

TECH CD2

PASSMARK PERFORMANCE TEST

Wondering how fast your system is? Passmark Performance test lets you quickly assess your computer's power and compare it to a number of standard, baseline systems. Version 3.3 includes new disk speed test graphs.

SI GUARDIAN

SiGuardian is the only tool what allows you to full control health of your HDDs and prevent data loss because of failures. Using S.M.A.R.T. technology SiGuardian predicts end date of HDD lifetime, so you can make backups just in time.

ADVANCE CATALOGUER

An easy to use tool with explorer-like interface which allows you to catalog all kind of media (floppies, CD-ROMS, ZIP disks etc). With it, you are able to organize volumes, folders and files into keywords, add comment and note to each file, print reports and more.

START MENU CLEANER

When an application installs itself, it frequently adds folders and shortcuts to the Start Menu. But when you remove the program, its folders and shortcuts sometimes remain. Start Menu Cleaner scans and removes all empty folders and shortcuts.

SPOTLIGHT CD2

QUAKE III TEAM ARENA

Category First Person Shooter

Publisher Activision

Need P2-300, 64MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Card

The Quake III: Team Arena Demo can be played without Quake III Arena installed on your system. However, the retail version of Quake III: Team Arena will require the full retail version of Quake III Arena be installed.

The Quake III Team Arena includes the following:

- Single Player (with bots) and multiplayer functionality
- 1 map (enabled for all of the Team Arena game types)
- 1 female and 1 male model - including 2 character heads
- 3 clan skins
- 4 gametypes: Capture the Flag, One Flag CTF, Harvester, and Overload
- 1 new weapon - Proximity Launcher
- 3 Team Power-ups: Guard, Ammo-Regen, and Doubler
- New in-game UI
- 1 new useable item - Kamikaze
- New main-menu UI (includes descriptions of all gametypes and power-ups)



Need P2-2660, 32MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Card
STCC2 features all the drivers, cars and teams from the 2000 championship. All the STCC tracks are included as well as two extra tracks; Kinnekulle Ring and Linköping's Motorstadium (two well known racing tracks in Sweden). The challenge is to participate as one of the drivers and win this prestigious championship.

DIRT TRACK RACING SPRINT CAR

Category Driving Sim
Publisher Ratbag
Need P166, 32MB, Win95/98/ME
The sport of sprint car racing is among the most popular motor sports in the United States with over 700 tracks, and millions of spectators attending weekly race



meetings. DTRSC is the first game to capture the essence of sprint car racing. It realistically simulates the physics of these unique machines, with their distinctive angled wings and top speeds of up to 170mph.

Controls
left, right - Steer.

Up - Accelerate.
Down - Brake.
Space - Change camera view.
left shift - Half lock steering.
Equals - Move wing forwards.
Minus - Move wing backwards.
left square bracket - Look left.
right square bracket - Look right.
Escape - exit game
F3 - Toggle display of race information.
F4 - Toggle display of the rear view mirror.

SACRIFICE

Category Action
Publisher Interplay
Need P2-300, 64MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Card
One to Four players will be able to control powerful wizards, armies of creatures, and utilize a myriad of spells and incantations to wreak havoc across a revolutionary 3D landscape. With vast worlds of clearly viewed terrain, multiple landscape designs, unlimited



camera angles, and over 50 different kinds of fantastic creatures at your command, Sacrifice will be the new benchmark against which all other RTS games are measured.

ZEUS MASTER OF OLYMPUS

Category Strategy
Publisher Sierra
Need P166, 32MB, Win95/98/ME
Experience mythology as you never imagined it. Invite gods, monsters, and heroes into a city you create and rule, as the creators of the award-winning City Building Series immerse you in the Heroic Age of Greece. Players will host Olympics, send Jason after the Golden Fleece, and establish colonies nearby.

PANZER GENERAL III SCORCHED EARTH

Category Strategy
Publisher SSI
Need P2-233, 64MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Card
SSI's Panzer General Series is one of the most successful operational wargame franchises of all time. From its initial launch in 1994 to the present, the Panzer General name has promised consumers a fun, accessible, and addictive strategy wargaming experience. The look and feel of the series evolved over the years and in 1999 the game went into a full 3-D graphics mode with a leader-based gaming system.

ELF BOWLING 2

Category Action
Publisher N/A
Need P2-300, 64MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Card
The snickering elves are back with Santa, but there is a new twist, as Santa's ne'er-do-well brother, Dingle Kringle, joins Santa and the elves on a cruise ship

headed for an island adventure. Players compete in a crazy shuffleboard tournament, with the elves serving as "pucks," providing their own special, colorful commentary. There are plenty of hilarious surprises to continue the irreverent escapades of the elves, and players can register their scores to compete with other participants from around the world.

VIRTUAL POOL 3

Category Sports Sim
Publisher Interplay
Need P200, 64MB, Win95/98/ME, 3D Card
The ultimate pool simulator arrives with enhanced graphics and a brand-new career mode! The only pool game that guarantees to make you a better player is still the best pool game in town. What you waiting for? Stop talking and start chalking.

SERVER CD2

CUTEFTP 4.32

CuteFTP is a powerful but easy-to-use FTP client. Version 4.2 includes the ability to automatically launch CuteFTP when you click on an FTP URL from within your browser, and also the ability to directly input any command that an FTP server supports.

REAL MP3 FINDER

The REAL MP3 Finder allows you to simultaneously use 40 search engines to find your favorite MP3 audio files. Version 5.0 offers an easier-to-use "songs to get" list, a new interface for online help, and support for over 40 search engines.

NETSCAPE 6

Fresh from Netscape comes the long-awaited new browser, featuring powerful email, advanced security measures, and much more. It's jumped from version 4.76 to version 6.0 so how it competes against Microsoft Internet Explorer has yet to be seen.

WAR FTP DAEMON

WAR FTP Daemon is the premier FTP server for Windows. No other FTP server application brings together the UNIX style security features, a BBS like interface for the system operator, the extreme flexibility and performance provided by this package.

GAMEPLAY CD2

UNREAL TOURNAMENT CHAOS UT MOD

If you thought UT was hectic, you ain't seen nothing yet. ChaosUT features 7 diverse new weapons, a bunch of new maps, sounds and features. Slice your opponents with the Bastard sword, or turn them into Swiss cheese - it's pure chaos.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT TWEAK 3D

This great little util lets you tweak your 3D settings for Unreal Tournament. Simply enter your desired screen resolution, your CPU and RAM in your system and then choose GLIDE, Direct3D, or OpenGL. The game will be tweaked for maximum performance.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT DEDICATED SERVER

So you got cable and you're an diehard UT veteran. What more could you want. How bout running your own Unreal Tournament dedicated server. This installation contains a modified version of UT and all the files you need to begin your own online fragstation.

UNREAL TOURNAMENT PATCH 4.36

Latest patch release for Unreal Tournament. This one addresses many multiplayer glitches such as server screens locking up, and comes with a few extra features like reporting which servers are password protected and so on. Should correct many UT problems.

QUAKE III EXCESSIVE OVERKILL MOD

Excessive is an over-the-top mod that makes weapons extremely powerful, turns off self-damage, gives all the players regenerating health and ammunition, and makes every game into a wild and crazy frag-fest.

QUAKE III GRINCH MODEL

Ahh the Grinch. A storybook character of legendary proportions, you've seen the movie, you have been bitten by his charm, now you can be the Grinch in this new Quake 3 Arena model. Just install and show the world how mean the Grinch can really be.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH JACK OF ALL GAMES 

GROUND CONTROL



A revolutionary engine it may have, but the mission design is the real highlight...

Show of Force was the mission that said it all for Ground Control. A briefing with just a hint that dear old Enrica Hayes was on to you; multiple objectives; plenty of vehicle types; action from the moment you hit the drop zone; and virtually no chance of making it to your next birthday!

No plan survives contact with the enemy, and Dwight was on your back for some unplanned support before you even had time to plot a course. Once you'd done his job for him - taking out the Hoverdynes that had arranged a nasty back door surprise - it was off to the Outpost at maximum speed. Your Aerodynes got there pretty quickly, but of course they didn't have to worry about the inconveniently placed minefields blocking the path. To be honest, the fantastic blast effects almost lessened the blow of losing your lead units!

Once at the Outpost, things got really exciting. Heavy Hoverdynes, Attack Aerodynes and fortifications were all keen on spoiling the party, and the casualties started to mount up once again. Nevertheless, through a brilliant combination of fire and manoeuvre, you destroyed the Power Unit with your artillery and pressed on to the main objectives. No worries about sacred sites in this battle - the Cathedrals were blasted to Kingdom Come, just before your Jaegers dismounted for the final assault upon the Command Centre.

Ground Control's Show of Force was the perfect mix of planning, squad tactics and raw excitement. Hit the rewind - let's head back in!



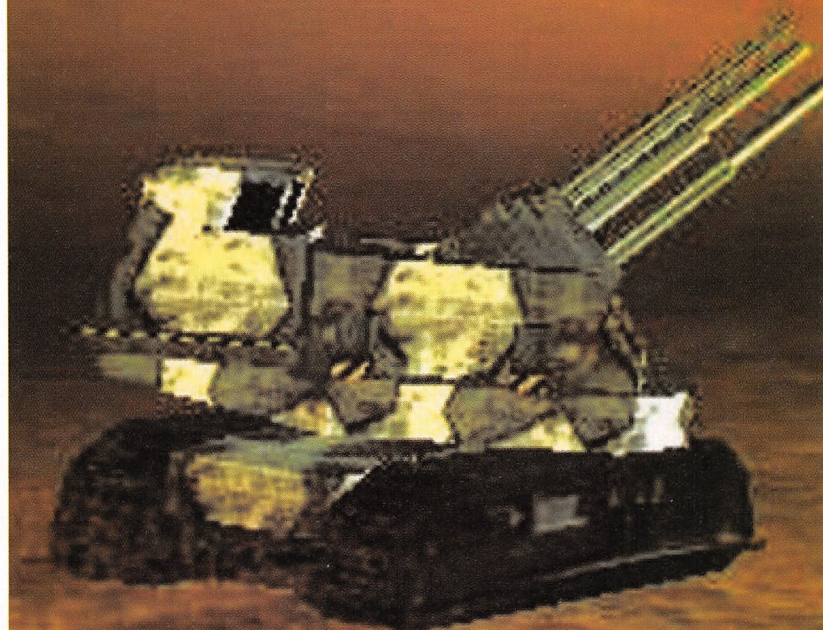
JACK OF ALL GAMES © 2000



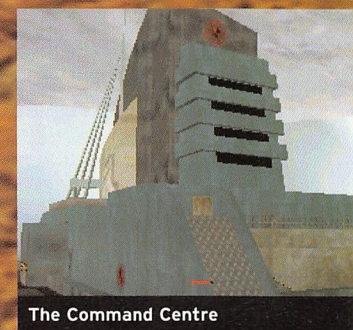
Hit the drop zone running for this one



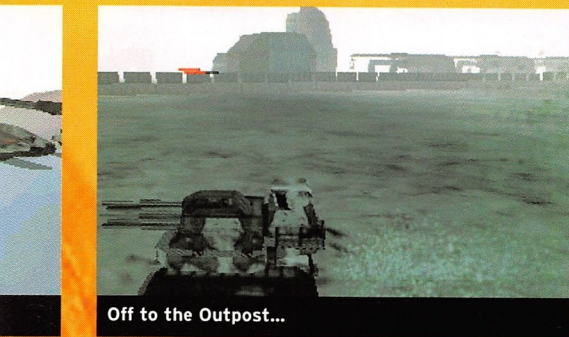
Dwight needs help - again!



...but God is on our side!



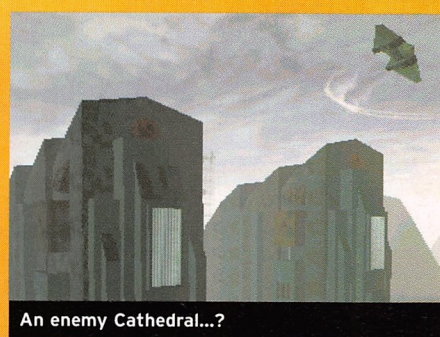
The Command Centre



Off to the Outpost...



...MINES!!!



An enemy Cathedral...?



Bayonets!



Bigger Bayonets!



Scratch one Command Centre

Rod Campbell (aka Spoonman)



The Commodore 64 is easily my favourite gaming platform of all time. In fact the only reason I play PC games now is that they're the closest I can get to the 'good old days'.

Game on! 0

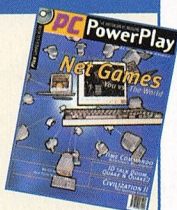
Unit type 001 ~ Influence device

This is the unit that you currently control. Prepare to board Robo-Freighter Hewstromo to eliminate all rogue roboty.

FOUR YEARS AS AUSTRALIA'S AUTHORITY ON PC GAMING

Online-only games were once again the focal point for the September '96 edition. Despite the rather inexplicable appearance on the cover of a PC and several Commodore Amigas conjoined in some weird conceptual, cross-platform cyber-utopia, the emphasis inside was distinctly Windows-oriented. Persistent world games were ready to explode, with the ubiquitous Ultima Online represented alongside a host of lesser-likes - Subspace, The Realm, Meridian 59 and Dark Sun among them. Although most of the featured titles have since slipped into obscurity, it's worth noting that at the same time Microsoft was busy signalling its intent through the purchase of the Internet Gaming Zone.

Dropping by for a chat was Mike Wilson, id Software's Biz Guy (now heading up Gathering of Developers), whose comment, "Perhaps they [the level designers] should have been doing Doom 3 while the Quake engine was being refined", might raise a few eyebrows thanks to recent events at the Texas studio. If Doom 3 had been released in 1996, what would it be working on right now. We wonder...



Time Commando (93%) Firefight (82%) Afterlife (81%)

"A game like Ultima Online has the potential to go on forever."
- Four years later, with a second expansion pack just announced and a proper sequel in the works, few would argue this won't happen.

WITH DANIEL STAINES

If you haven't played or seen one of these systems before, let me briefly explain what they consisted of: think a large, black TV dinner tray and then, where the



control pad would be, add what looks to be a large, cumbersome Turkish telephone and voila! Intellivision - an absolutely deluxe 80s gaming system courtesy of Mattel and home of my first game, Super Cobra.

The goal of Super Cobra was to fly your well-armed lunchbox (we'll pretend it's a helicopter so as not to upset the programmers) around dank caves while shooting other

enemy lunchboxes and collecting booty. *Note:* 'booty', as in treasure, money, gems and all that piratey rot; not 'boo-tay', as in whatz on all dem fine wimmez in da ghetto. Anyways, the game could've been good except one had to control it with the telephone device.

So, in closing, a note to Mattel: the reason why your system failed is because no one likes having to dial in their commands when playing games. And Barbie? Die.

Contributions to MY 1ST GAME are welcome.

Send 100 words and a pic of the game (or game box) to:

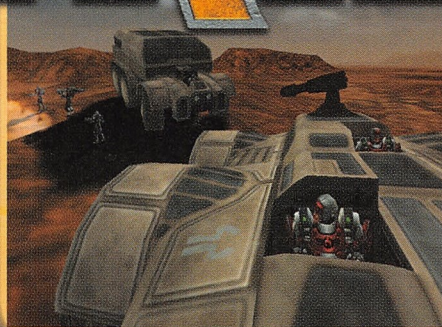
letters@pcpowerplay.com.au with "MY 1ST GAME" in the subject line.

You took
their flag.

Now they're
coming to
bury you
with it.

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THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE SLUGGISH
DURING THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

- 60** Anthony joining the PCPP crew in a fulltime capacity
- 55** Planet Moon Studios overcoming near-tragedy to finally ship Giants
- 50** The Team Arena demo reviving the office LAN sessions of Quake 3...
- 45** ...though not always at the expense of 'testing' the Tribes 2 beta
- 40** Microsoft's show of commitment to Xbox developers at the AGDC
- 35** Wrangling an invite to EA's PS2 launch party. Cheers Susy; jeers to the games
- 30** The PC version of Obi-Wan being cancelled. We're kinda ambivalent about it
- 25** The rest of the AGDC being so lacklustre, aside from the Xbox stuff
- 20** Publishers rushing games out just before Christmas...
- 15** ...and not releasing review code of said games to the press
- 10** The rumours of Max Payne's premature demise
- 05** Freelancer. What a farce...

QUIZ

ARE YOU A HARDCORE GAMER?

1. What was the default weapon in the original Quake?
2. The first race in Grand Prix 3's championship is held at which circuit?
3. In which country is Baldur's Gate developer Bioware based?
4. Sid Meier's Alpha Centauri was designed by whom?
5. Best known for inventing the 'god sim', Peter Molyneux also once released a platform game. What was it called?

Answers
1. An axe. 2. Albert Park, Melbourne
3. Canada 4. Brian Reynolds 5. Flood (on the Commodore Amiga)

New Black & White Creatures Revealed

WHICH ANIMALS WILL BE JOINING MOLYNEUX'S MENAGERIE?

CREATURE	SPECIAL ABILITY	IS IT APPEALING TO THE PLAYER?	CHOOSING IT SAYS WHAT ABOUT THE PLAYER?	HOW DOES IT LOOK STANDING ON IT'S HIND LEGS?	ODDS OF BEING IN THE FINAL GAME
Cat	None. It just sits there and views you with contempt.	Very. Cats are always cute and cuddly.	You aren't easily bored.	It ain't gonna get on two legs.	50/1. Long shot.
Elephant	Keeps the farms well fertilised.	Yes, especially to Dumbo and Age of Empires fans.	Its acute memory is probably compensating for yours.	Patently absurd.	100/1. Very slim.
Meerkat	Height when standing increases vision.	Reasonably. Not the most widely known beast, but loved by those who do.	You're a busybody.	Ridiculous, but perfectly normal.	66/1. Too obscure.
Orc	Ubiquity. In endless supply in all RPGs.	No. Orcs are disgusting.	You are ironic.	No more or less disgusting.	12/1. Quite healthy.
Oyster	Shell provides extra resilience.	Well, they taste nice...	You're not entirely serious about playing the game.	It has no legs.	1000/1. Forget it.
Rogue AI	Knows what you're doing before you do it.	Perhaps too hard to identify with.	You trust no one.	Depends which of the population it has possessed.	4/1. Excellent, considering it probably wrote the game.

SCOOP! "GOD SPOKE TO ME!" SAYS MOLYNEUX



Molyneux...
demi-god

Giving an entirely new meaning to the term 'god sim', acclaimed head of Lionhead studios and creator of Black & White, Peter Molyneux, recently spilled the beans to our London correspondent as to the exact nature of the inspiration behind his groundbreaking innovations in the gaming industry. Although Mr Molyneux is currently threatening to sue our "bleedin' heads in", we have taken the liberty to print a slightly edited, yet still earth-shattering, transcript of that fateful* interview** in a dingy London pub:

PCPP: So, are you sure you don't want any more orange juice, Peter? This is only your sixth glass.

Peter Molyneux: *hic* Y... you know ... it tastes strangely *hic* ... STRONGER than oransch juuvice. Al ... almost like vodka ... *hic*

PCPP: Oh, no. (motioning to barkeep to top up) It's orange juice alright. But, Peter, pressing on with the interview...

PM: Interview?

PCPP: Never mind. Anyway, pressing on, what would you say has been your main inspiration behind innovative

titles such as Populous, Syndicate and the upcoming Black & White?

PM: Welllll, actschully, *hic* I was rang up my friend, God, on the phone the other day and I said 'God, where do you think I shou-' ... oh no.

PCPP: Did you just say that ... GOD is your friend and inspiration?

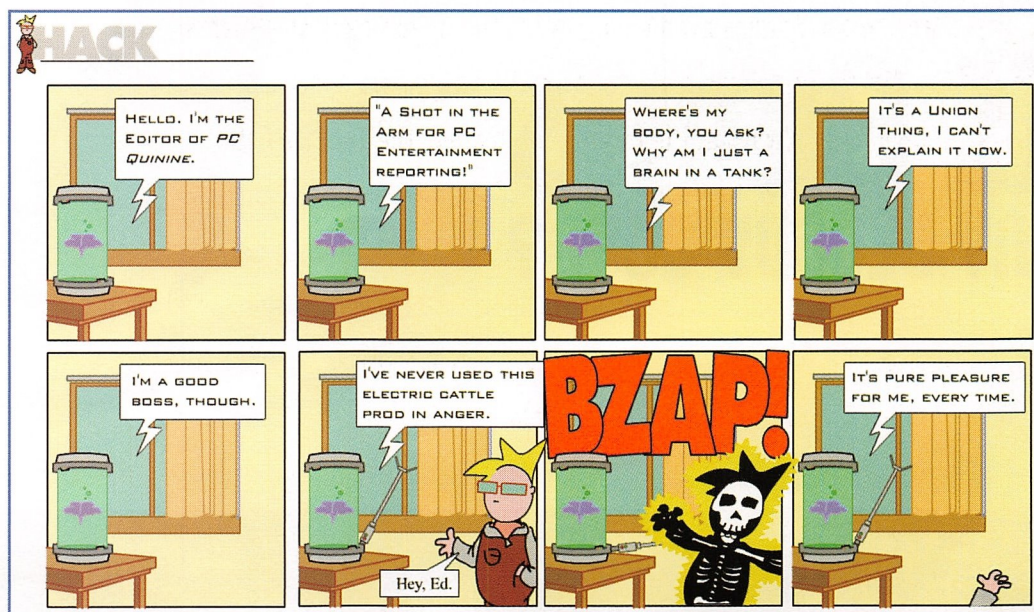
PM: Oh no ... this could ruin me. This interview is over ... (looking around) Where AM I?

PCPP: I say, is that my bus? (runs)

There you have it readers. Although Mr. Molyneux vehemently denied saying any of the above, we contacted our

correspondent in the after-life, Satan, and asked him to confirm or deny Molyneux's apparent demi-god status. "Oh sure," said the lord of lies, "everyone down here's known that Peter and God have been trading ideas for years now." Need we say more?

* completely made up ** bunch of lies.



ONE ISLAND TO CONQUER

TWO CHOICES KILL OR BE KILLED

THREE CREATURES KABUTO, THE SEA REAPERS, THE MECCARYNS

FOUR YEARS IN THE MAKING...



**IS ISLANDS
ANY BLOODY GOOD?**

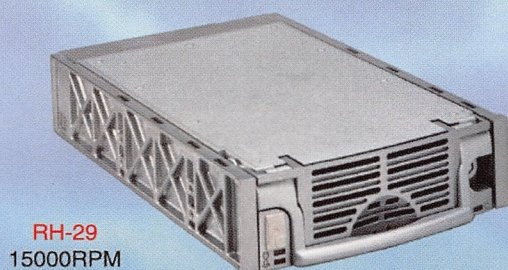
PC PowerPlay #58 - On sale 7 February 2001



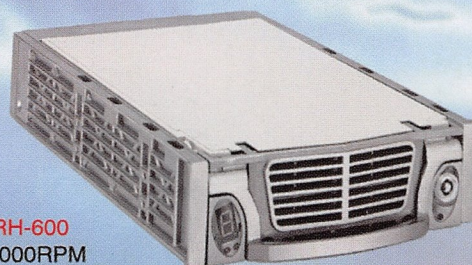
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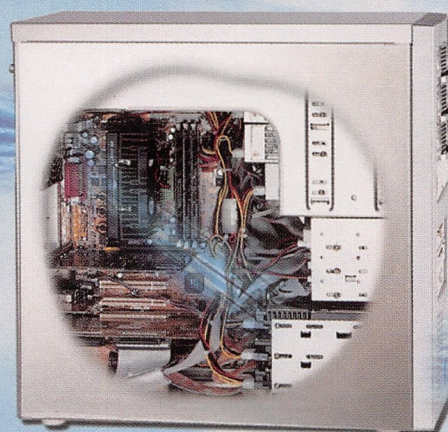
RH-29
15000RPM



RH-600
15000RPM

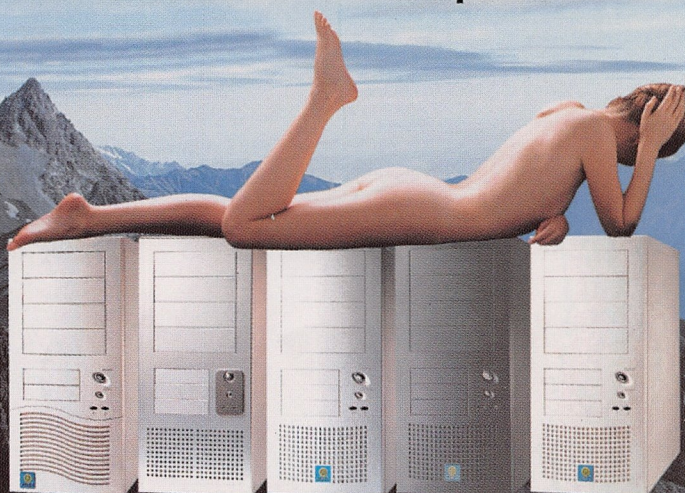
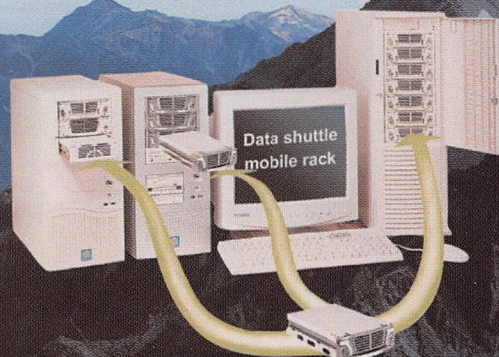
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